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MARLBOROUGH  
HIS LIFE AND TIMES



*By the Same Author*

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THE STORY OF THE MALAKAND  
FIELD FORCE  
THE RIVER WAR  
LONDON TO LADYSMITH  
IAN HAMILTON'S MARCH  
LIFE OF LORD RANDOLPH  
CHURCHILL  
MY AFRICAN JOURNEY  
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THE AFTERMATH  
THE EASTERN FRONT  
MY EARLY LIFE: A ROVING  
COMMISSION  
THOUGHTS AND ADVENTURES





MARLBOROUGH

From a copy of a painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*National Portrait Gallery*

# MARLBOROUGH

## HIS LIFE AND TIMES

*By*

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
WINSTON S. CHURCHILL C.H. M.P.

VOLUME III

LONDON  
GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD.  
BOMBAY & SYDNEY

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## PREFACE

I HAD purposed to finish the story of Marlborough and his Times in this volume; but as the massive range of the material came fully into view it was clear that this could not be done without altering the balance and proportion of the work and failing to give a level, comprehensive account. I have therefore ended this volume after the campaign of 1708.

At this point Louis XIV saw himself to be definitely defeated, and his whole desire was for peace, almost at any price. On the other hand, the Allies, although war-wearied and discordant, had extended the original objects of the war, raised their terms, and hardened their hearts. At the same time Marlborough's power, triumphant in the field, and now accepted as paramount throughout the Grand Alliance, was completely undermined at home. He and his faithful colleague Godolphin had lost all effective hold upon Queen Anne, had no control of the Whigs, and were pursued by the malignity of the Tories. The Whig Junto had at last forced themselves upon the Queen, and established for the first time a powerful party Administration supported by majorities in both Houses of Parliament. Upon this rigid, tightly built, but none the less brittle platform Marlborough and Godolphin were still able to act, and Marlborough was to be furnished with greater means to conduct the war than he had ever before possessed. But the hollowness of his foundations was apparent to Europe, and especially to the enemy. It was known at Versailles that the Queen was estranged from Sarah, that she wished to extend her favour to the Tories, or Peace Party, as they had now unitedly become, and that she was in intimate contact by the backstairs through her bedchamber woman Abigail Masham with Harley, the leader of the Opposition. The knowledge of these deadly facts,

## MARLBOROUGH

coupled with the harsh demands of the Allies, encouraged France to struggle forward, until the fall of Marlborough broke the strength and blunted the action of the Grand Alliance, and brought it to a situation incomparably worse than that of 1708.

The constitutional and European issues debated in this present volume are peculiarly apposite to the times in which we live. At home they involve and portray, first, the Union of Great Britain; secondly, the establishment of party government as the expression of a Parliamentary Constitution; and, thirdly, the shaping of the Cabinet system, in the forms in which these arrangements were destined to survive for over two hundred years. By the Great Rebellion against Charles I, and by the Revolution of 1688, the House of Commons had gained the means of controlling policy through the power of the purse. But in the reign of Anne the Sovereign still preserved, not only in theory but in practice, the right to choose Ministers. Naturally the Crown, lifted above party, sought to maintain its own power by forming Court Governments, or, as we should now call them, national Governments, from both the organized political factions and from outside them. The stresses of a prolonged world war and the vast pre-eminence of Marlborough favoured such an inclination. He understood with his deep sagacity that only a peace party can make or wage a war with united national strength. His fears that a Tory Party in opposition would weaken, if not destroy, the war effort of England, and the Queen's fears that, without the Tories in the Government, she would fall wholly into the hands of the Whigs, with all that that implied in Church and State, constituted a bond of harmony between servant and Sovereign which carried on our weak country and the loose confederacy of which it was the prop through the darkest, and at times apparently the hopeless, years of the struggle.

But after the glories of Blenheim had roused the martial enthusiasm of the English nation the Whigs, with their ardour for Continental war and leadership, obtained in very large measure, and in the end entirely, control not only

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of the Lords but of the Commons. It was not surprising that they insisted upon predominance in the Government. The dismissal of the high Tories, the intermediate system of the moderates of both parties which Harley rendered possible, and the steady incursion of the Whig leaders into the Cabinet Council comprised an evolution which in the compass of this volume led from a royal or national to a party administration in the height of a prolonged but successful war. Marlborough and Godolphin were forced step by step to yield to remorseless Parliamentary pressures, and make themselves the reluctant instruments of bringing them to bear upon the Queen. In so doing they, and still more Sarah—that keen Whig partisan—lost with the stubborn Queen the influence which alone had enabled them to cope with so many difficulties, and found themselves ultimately shorn of every source of organized domestic strength. All that remained was Marlborough's universally acknowledged indispensability, whether for the victorious waging of war or the successful negotiation of peace.

The reader will be able to judge for himself whether they could have taken any other course. Upon the whole I incline to the view that greater risks should have been run in 1707 to preserve the coalition character of the Government, to placate the Queen, and to work with Harley. On the other hand, the House of Commons was master of the money, and no Minister, however magnificent and successful, could long withstand its hostility. Secondly, the Cabinet system in its rapid adolescence presented insoluble problems to its members. Great nobles and famous statesmen sat round the Council Board united by no party bond, and owing allegiance to rival factions engaged in bitter Parliamentary conflict. Once the Queen's loyalties began to be in doubt, divergent personal and party interests manifested themselves in treacherous disclosures and intrigues. When Marlborough's sword brought home the triumphs of Ramillies and Oudenarde, when all men saw the princes and states of Europe arrayed against France under his supreme direction, these disruptive tendencies were held in suspense, and all bathed their hands in



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streams of martial glory and growing British power. But a barren or adverse campaign relaxed all ties, and Marlborough's defeat in the field, or even failure in a major siege, would have destroyed them. When in Marlborough's conduct of war we see now violent and sudden action with armies marching night and day, and all hazards dared for a decision, now long delays and seeming irresolution, the dominating fact to be remembered is that he could not afford to be beaten. So he never was beaten. He could not bear the impact of defeats such as his warrior comrade Eugene repeatedly survived. Neither in his headquarters at the front nor behind him at home did he have that sense of plenary authority which gave to Frederick the Great and to Napoleon their marvellous freedom of action. It is the exhibition of infinite patience and calculation, combined upon occasion with reckless audacity, both equally attended with invariable success, which makes his military career unique. When British generals of modern times feel themselves hampered by the tardy or partial action of allies, or embarrassed by the political situation at home, let them draw from the example of Marlborough new resources of endurance, without losing his faculty of "venturing all."

In these pages I also show the seamy side. A shorter account would, if justice were done, be compelled to dwell almost entirely upon the broad achievements. I have faithfully endeavoured to examine every criticism or charge which the voluminous literature upon this period contains, even where they are plainly tinctured with prejudice or malice, even where they rest on no more than slanderous or ignorant gossip. In the main Marlborough's defence rests upon his letters to Sarah and Godolphin. It is strange that this man who consciously wrote no word of personal explanation for posterity should in his secret, intimate correspondence, which he expected to be destroyed, or at least took no trouble to preserve, have furnished us with his case in terms far more convincing than anything written for the public eye. The reader's attention is especially drawn to these letters, not only those that have never been published, and which are now

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printed in their quaint, archaic style, but to the immense series drawn from Coxe's *Life* and Murray's *Dispatches*. I have sedulously endeavoured to reduce them, in the interests of the narrative, but in so many cases they *are* the narrative, and tell the tale far better than any other pen. They plead for Marlborough's virtue, patriotism, and integrity as compulsively as his deeds vindicate his fame. Although no scholar, and for all his comical spelling, he wrote a rugged, forceful English worthy of the Shakespeare on which his education was mainly founded. He held the whole panorama of Europe in his steady gaze, and presented it in the plainest terms of practical good sense.

How vain and puerile seem the calumnies with which the Deputy Goslinga has fed Continental historians, and with which Thackeray's *Esmond* has familiarized the English-speaking world, beside Marlborough's plain day-to-day accounts of his hopes and fears in the long-drawn struggle for Lille! How base appear the slanders with which Tory faction assailed him in those vanished days! Everything Marlborough writes to his wife and cherished friends rings true, and proves him the "good Englishman" he aspired to be.

I have not sought to palliate his vice or foible in money matters. In his acquisitive and constructive nature the gathering of an immense fortune and artistic treasures wherewith to found and endow his family was but a lower manifestation of the same qualities which cemented the Grand Alliance and led England to Imperial greatness. His avarice never prejudiced his public duty. For the sake of petty economies, mostly affecting himself, he let himself become a joke among the officers and soldiers who trusted and loved him; while at the same time he made generous benefactions of which the world knew nothing to his children, friends, and subordinates, and to strangers in distress; or spent large sums upon buildings which would long outlast him. An instinctive hatred of waste in all its forms, private and public, and particularly where his own comfort was concerned, was his dominant motive. Narrowly

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he scrutinized the expenses of the army; but the soldiers praised the precision with which their food and rations reached them through all the long campaigns. With zest he collected the percentages for which he held the Royal Warrant on the bread contracts and on the pay of the foreign troops; but never was Secret Service money more lavishly or more shrewdly expended. Given only a small addition to the great authority he wielded, he would have brought the war to a victorious end with half its havoc and slaughter; would have made a wise and stable peace in harmony with the highest interests of England and of Europe; and at the same time blandly pocketed the largest possible commissions on these august transactions. We see him in the midst of his hardest struggles cheered by the prospect of a small perquisite of plate, and yet unhesitatingly brushing aside the revenues of a viceroyalty when his acceptance of that princely office would have impaired the cohesion of the Allies. Half the money which he gave in private kindness, if spent upon his table in camp, would have doubled his popularity. It would not have affected his worth.

Most of the English characters of the earlier campaigns present themselves again in this volume. Marlborough is everywhere attended at the front by his devoted friends Cadogan and Cardonnell, the former combining the functions of Chief of the Staff and Quartermaster-General, the latter presiding over and conducting a correspondence which extended from the Duke's Headquarters to every capital in Europe. We find again Marlborough's brothers—George managing the Admiralty, and Charles at the head of the Infantry; and his great fighting officers Orkney, Lumley, Argyll, and his younger men, Brigadiers Meredith and Palmes. The war in Spain introduces remarkable personalities. Peterborough, Galway, Stanhope, each in his own way shows the plethora of quality and ability at the disposal of the Crown in these famous years. Godolphin still guards Marlborough's home base; Heinsius and Hop and Buys preserve his profound relations with the Dutch republic. Wratislaw is his contact with the Empire. There are some

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grand German princes and warriors in the heroic Hesse-Darmstadt, the Prince of Hesse, and the Prussian cavalymen Rantzau and Natzmer. Always through the drama runs the brotherhood in arms of Marlborough and Eugene.

In one other main aspect the story of this volume has a peculiar interest for us to-day. We see a world war of a League of Nations against a mighty, central military monarchy, hungering for domination not only over the lands but over the politics and religion of its neighbours. We see in their extremes the feebleness and selfish shortcomings of a numerous coalition, and how its weaker members cast their burdens upon the strong, and sought to exploit the unstinted efforts of England and Holland for their own advantage. We see all these evils redeemed by the statecraft and personality of Marlborough, and by his military genius and that of his twin captain, Eugene. Thus the causes in which were wrapped the liberties of Europe were carried to safety for several generations.

In a final volume I design to describe the fall of Marlborough after his main work was done. Here again the tale is rich in suggestion and instruction for the present day; for it illustrates what seems to have become the tradition of Britain—indomitable in distress and danger, exorbitant at the moment of success, fatuous and an easy prey after her superb effort had run its course. Here we shall see harsh and excessive demands producing innumerable unforeseen reactions upon the defeated nations. Here in foretaste we may read the bitter story of how in the eighteenth century England won the war and lost the peace.

I have followed in these pages the method of the earlier volumes. The reader should consult the preface to Volume II for some comments upon the authorities to whom I have recurred. The bibliography has been extended to cover the new years through which the story now runs. It will be seen that I have drawn deeply upon the records of foreign archives and the writings of Continental historians. There is no doubt that they give a more vivid and vital picture

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of Marlborough's life and times than anything which had appeared in the English language until the illuminating and impartial work of Professor Trevelyan.

I have tried as far as possible to tell the story through the lips of its actors or from the pens of contemporary writers, feeling sure that a phrase struck out at the time is worth many coined afterwards. Great pains have again been taken with the diagrams and maps in order that the non-military reader may without effort understand 'what happened and why.' I am again indebted to Brigadier R. P. Pakenham-Walsh in this respect, and for his assistance in the whole technical field. Commander J. H. Owen, R.N., has helped me in naval matters. I again renew my thanks to all those who have so kindly allowed me to reproduce pictures and portraits in their possession, and also to those who have placed original documents at my disposal. I make my acknowledgments in every case. I also record my thanks to the present Duke of Marlborough for continuing to me all that freedom of the Blenheim archives without which my task could neither have been begun nor pursued.

WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL

CHARTWELL

WESTERHAM

*August 13, 1936*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

B.M. = British Museum Library.

H.M.C. = *Report of the Royal Historical Manuscripts Commission.*

Documents never before made public are distinguished by an asterisk (\*) and left for the most part in their original form.

All italics are the Author's, unless the contrary is stated.

In the diagrams, except where otherwise stated, fortresses held by the Allies are shown as black stars and those occupied by the French as white stars.

## METHOD OF DATING

Until 1752 dates in England and on the Continent differed owing to our delay in adopting the Reformed Calendar of Gregory XIII. The dates which prevailed in England were known as Old Style, those abroad as New Style. In the seventeenth century the difference was ten days, in the eighteenth century eleven days. For example, January 1, 1601 (O.S.), was January 11, 1601 (N.S.), and January 1, 1701 (O.S.), was January 12, 1701 (N.S.).

The method used has been to give all dates of events that occurred in England in the Old Style, and of events that occurred abroad in New Style. Letters and papers are dated in the New Style unless they were actually written in England. In sea battles and a few other convenient cases the dates are given in both styles.

It was also customary at this time—at any rate, in English official documents—to date the year as beginning on Lady Day, March 25. What we should call January 1, 1700, was then called January 1, 1699, and so on for all days up to March 25, when 1700 began. This has been a fertile source of confusion. In this book all dates between January 1 and March 25 have been made to conform to the modern practice.



## CHAPTER I

### THE WHIG APPROACH

THE General Election which began in May 1705 produced changes in English politics which at first seemed only-slight and beneficial, but which set in train events of decisive importance to Marlborough and his fortunes. The Captain-General was capable of enduring endless vexations and outfacing extreme hazards. But he had one sensitive spot. In the armour of leather and steel by which in public affairs he was encased there was a chink into which a bodkin could be plunged. He sought not only glory but appreciation. When according to his judgment he had done well he yearned for the praise of his fellow-countrymen, and especially of those Tory squires—‘the gentlemen of England,’ as they styled themselves—to whom he naturally belonged, but with whom he was ever at variance. They were the audience whose applauses he sought to compel; and when instead of admiration he received their sneers and belittlings his indignation was profound. “Blenheim indeed!” quoth they. “What was that? A stroke of luck, and the rest the professional knowledge of Eugene.” Rooke was the man and the sea war the theme. The campaign of 1705, was it not a failure? All this Continental exertion and expense were follies which should be stopped. How much longer must the blood and treasure of England be consumed in European struggles while rich booty glittered neglected across the oceans and the Church was in danger at home? Thus the Tories. On the other hand stood the Whigs, logical, precise, resolute, the wholehearted exponents of the great war on land and of England rising to the directing summit of the world.

Sarah, as we can judge from John’s replies, must have confronted him with this contrast in many a letter. She saw,

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with a woman's unsentimental discernment, that his illusions about the Tories were vain. They would ever be his foes, and would in the end work his ruin. Her hatred of them ran bitter and strong. With deft hand she picked and shot at him the Tory taunts that would sting him most; and others no doubt wrote in the same strain. Usually the Duke was proof against all minor assaults; but when the Moselle campaign was ruined by the desertion of the German princes and his fine conceptions in Brabant were one after another frustrated by the obstinacy and jealousy of the Dutch commanders, many shafts got home, and he palpably winced under the pangs.

The Parliamentary manœuvre of the Tories in trying to 'tack' the Occasional Conformity Bill to the main supply of the year was undoubtedly a breach of the solemn unwritten convention by which Whigs and Tories were alike bound—that, however party strife might rage, the national war effort must not be weakened. Reluctantly but remorselessly during 1705 Marlborough took the resolve to break with the Tories. His resentment burned through his letters to Godolphin from the front:

*April 14*

As to what you say of the tackers, I think the answer and method that should be taken is what is practised in all armies—that is, if the enemy give no quarter, they should have none given to them.<sup>1</sup>

And on June 24:

I beg you will give my humble duty to the Queen, and assure her that nothing but my gratitude to her could oblige me to serve her after the disappointments I have met with in Germany, for nothing has been performed that was promised; and to add to this they write to me from England that the tackers and all their friends are glad of the disappointments I meet with, saying that if I had success this year like the last the Constitution of England would be ruined. As I have no other ambition but that of serving well her Majesty, *and being thought what I am, a good Englishman, this vile, enormous faction of theirs vexes me* so much that I hope the Queen will after this campaign give me leave to retire and end my days in praying for her prosperity and making my own peace with

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, *Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough* (second edition, 1820), II, 70.

## THE WHIG APPROACH

God. . . . I beg you will not oppose this, thinking it may proceed at this time from the spleen ; I do assure you it does not, but is from the *base ingratitude of my countrymen*. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Even before the scandal of the 'tack,' not only Marlborough and Godolphin but Harley too seem to have made up their minds to lean upon the Whigs, as Sarah ceaselessly urged. The first sign of this was Marlborough's willingness in the spring of 1705 to demand the Privy Seal from the Duke of Buckingham, whose intrigues with the Tory leaders had become obvious. This might have seemed a delicate matter ; for Buckingham had romantic, if faded, claims upon the Queen's favour. He had been her first and sole flirtation. He was her personal appointment. Anne, however, seems to have made little difficulty about this. He was succeeded by the Duke of Newcastle, possibly the richest man in England and, though not a Junto stalwart, the fountain of Whig hospitality. On the night of March 28, 1705, when Buckingham retired, Portland (King William's favourite and friend Bentinck, now become one of the most important sources of information on London affairs to the Dutch Government) wrote exultingly to Heinsius, "The liaison is thoroughly effective between the Whigs and 22 and 23 [Marlborough and Godolphin]." <sup>2</sup> A more significant step was the supersession of Admiral Rooke in the command of the Fleet. This ran directly counter to the resolution which the Tories had carried in the Commons, coupling his victory of Malaga with that of Blenheim, and may well have been the royal and ministerial rejoinder to it. Indeed, Harley's agent Defoe described Rooke in one of his pamphlets in these blistering terms :

A man that never once fought since he was admiral : that always embraced the party that opposed the Government, and has constantly favoured, preferred, and kept company with the high furious Jacobite party, and has filled the Fleet with them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cox, ii, 127.

<sup>2</sup> Von Noorden, *Europäische Geschichte im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (1870), ii, 248

<sup>3</sup> Portland Papers, H M C, viii, 136.



## MARLBOROUGH

At the beginning of April the Lord-Lieutenancies, so important in elections, were shuffled in favour of the Whigs. On April 7, two days after the dissolution, political society was astonished to see the Queen sit down to luncheon with Orford (Admiral Russell) and other Lords of the Junto.<sup>1</sup> These steps showed, and were meant to show, the electorate which way the royal favour inclined.

Yet it is remarkable with what restraint Marlborough and Godolphin tried to measure the blow which must now be struck. There was no sense in weakening the Tories only to fall into the hands of the Whigs. Enough force must be used to beat them, but not so much as to produce a Whig triumph; for then the balance would be deranged, and the two super-Ministers and the Queen would but have exchanged the wrong-headed grumblings and intrigues of the Tories for the exacting appetites and formulas of the Whigs. Marlborough wrote to Sarah from The Hague (April 19/30):

[Neither] You nor anybody living can wish more for the having a good Parliament than I do, but we may differ in our notions. I will own to you very freely mine; which is, that I think at this time it is for the Queen's service, and the good of England, that the choice might be such as that neither party might have a great majority, so that her Majesty might be able to influence what might be good for the common interest.<sup>2</sup>

Such sentiments were, of course, agreeable to the Queen. Thus the Cockpit circle, still intact, embarked upon the election with a desire to chastise the Tories, but not too much, and to procure a Parliament in which, the Whigs and Tories being equally matched, the "Queen's servants," as the placemen were called, and the moderates would hold the balance.

Such nicely calculated plans rarely stand the rough tests of action. The rank and file cannot fight hard to win only half a victory; and once the party forces were launched to the attack they strove with might and main. Everywhere the Tories proclaimed the Church in danger. Sir John Pakington

<sup>1</sup> Dispatches of Spanheim (Prussian Resident in London), April 9, 1705; von Noorden, II, 248.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, II, 232.



ADMIRAL SIR GEORGE ROOKE

Michael Dahl

*By permission of David Minore, Esq.*



## THE WHIG APPROACH

rode to the hustings of Worcester under a banner which portrayed a toppling steeple. The highflying Tories were furious at what they called the Queen's desertion of the Church, which they epitomized thus :

When Anna was the Church's daughter,  
She did whate'er that mother taught her ;  
But now she's mother to the Church  
She leaves her daughter in the lurch.<sup>1</sup>

A pamphlet called *The Memorial of the Church of England*, by Dr Drake, attributed this desertion of the Church to Marlborough and Godolphin. Everywhere the Tories railed against the expense of the Continental war and denounced the meanness of Britain's allies and the mistakes of her leaders on the Continent and at the Admiralty. The oppressive land-tax upon the country gentlemen and the growing National Debt were contrasted with the fat profits of the upstart financiers and money interest of the City of London. Lust for war by those whom the war paid, and greed for self-advancement by those whose hypocritical conformity exposed the Church to mortal peril, were the Tory accusations.

To modern eyes this would seem a good platform. It marshalled all the prejudices of the Old England against the fighting effort of the New. But the vision of the English people was not clouded. Out of the brawl and clatter of the polls one dominating fact emerged—the battle of Blenheim. From the depth of the national heart surged up a glow of pride and of desire for British greatness. Mighty France, four times as populous, the Grand Monarch, tyrant of Europe in all his splendour, cut to the ground by island blades and English genius ; his proudest regiments led off captive in thousands by the redcoats, his generals and nobles brought home in droves and tethered about the countryside ; conquest, glory, the world to win and the man to win it—these scenes and thoughts stirred the English imagination.

Thus, although the Tories, both Tackers and Sneakers, as they called one another, fought with deep-rooted local strength, it was apparent by the beginning of July that the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, viii, 241.

## MARLBOROUGH

voting would carry their defeat beyond the calculations of the Ministry. Godolphin succeeded in breaking Sir Edward Seymour's ascendancy in Cornwall. Cadogan was easily elected through Marlborough's influence for Woodstock. The Tackers, indeed, though they suffered heavily, and all their names were on a special black list, returned seventy-five or eighty strong out of a hundred and thirty-four. But a good many moderate Tories fell, and the Whig Party gained at the expense of both. They had been but one-fifth of the old House of Commons. They were now nearly equal to the Tories. Hitherto, with their ascendancy in the House of Lords, they had been able to maintain themselves vigorously in the State. Now, with the Commons so much more evenly divided, their predominance became apparent. If they joined with the extreme Tories in a general opposition the new House of Commons would be unmanageable. If they supported the Government what price would they ask in return? This now became the crux.

The Queen scented the danger at once. To Godolphin, on the other hand, it seemed obvious that the Ministry would have to depend on Whig support. Marlborough, impressed by the toughness of the Tackers, was of the same opinion.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

LENS LES BÉGUINES

July 6, 1705

\* Upon my examining the list you sent me of the New Parl: I find so great a number of Tackers and their adherents that I should have been very uneasy in my own mind, if I had not on this occasion begged of the Queen as I have in my letter, that She shou'd be pleas'd for Her own Sake, and the good of Her Kingdom to advise early with You, what incoragement might be proper to give the Whigs, that they might look upon it as their own Concern, to beat down and oppose all such proposals as may prove uneasy to Her Maty's government. . . . When I have said this, You know my opinion, and I am sure it is yours also, that all the Care imaginable must be taken that the Queen be not in the hands of any Party, for Party is always unreasonable and unjust.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

## THE WHIG APPROACH

He wrote in this sense more at length to the Queen ten days later, adding at the end :

By the vexation and trouble I undergo I find a daily decay, which may deprive me of the honour of seeing your Majesty any more, which thought makes me take the liberty to beg of your Majesty that for your own sake and the happiness of your kingdoms you will never suffer any body to do Lord Treasurer an ill office. For besides his integrity for your service, his temper and abilities are such that he is the only man in England capable of giving such advice as may keep you out of the hands of both parties, which may at last make you happy, if quietness can be had in a country where there is so much faction.<sup>1</sup>

The Lords of the Junto surveyed the scene on the morrow of the elections with cool and determined eyes. They might well have been tempted to claim their rights with the same pedantic rigour with which they held their doctrines. Their turn, they felt, was coming. Why should not the war party wage the war? They had the strength, they had the talents, they had the experience, they had the Cause—why should they be proscribed? Why, indeed, should they not have the Government? Their wishes were no more than the workings of the Constitution would nowadays automatically concede. But at the beginning of the eighteenth century the Crown was still the prime factor in actual politics. The Queen might not be able to choose the policy of the State, but she could still choose the agents to conduct it. To entrust her beloved Church to the freethinking Whigs and their Dissenter supporters, to surround her person with men who in their hearts, as she believed, were the inveterate enemies of monarchy, to part with faithful Tory Ministers and household friends under Parliamentary pressure, was all against the grain to her.

The conflicts and disputations between Lords and Commons which had lasted since 1698 were now ended by Whig control and influence in both Houses. But in its place there opened a wearing struggle in which the Whigs,

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, ii, 131.

## MARLBOROUGH

using all the resources and pressures of Parliamentary government, sought to force themselves upon the Queen. The Tory Party was splintered into four sections: the Jacobites, who claimed to be the only true exponents of the Tory creed; the anti-Jacobite Tories, generically dubbed the Sneakers, or more courteously "the Whimsicals"; the Tackers, whose embittered opposition was led by Rochester and Nottingham and found a new and eloquent mouthpiece in the converted Whig, Haversham; and the placemen, the "Queen's Servants" and independent moderate forces who followed Harley and St John, deferred to the Court, and sustained the Government. Although the whole party had an underlying sense of unity, and felt alike on many questions of peace and war, they were for the time paralysed by their feuds. Indeed, in the Commons they could not find a single man of sufficient distinction and aptitude to be their leader. Their opposition was effectively vocal only in the Lords. Yet, resting as they claimed upon the Land and the Church, commanding as they did the support of the squires and parsons, they constituted the strongest political force in the realm. If at any moment Tory divisions were healed, their inherent power would assert itself.

The five Whig nobles, on the other hand, had the advantages of unity and leadership. They controlled a disciplined party, inspired by broad and logical principles, which in its most active branches, interests, and classes accepted their guidance with almost military obedience. Long and frequent were the conclaves of the Junto in their great country houses. They knew well the prejudices of the Queen against them. They acted at first with the utmost moderation and with admirable adroitness. They decided to put forward Sunderland, their youngest member—the only one who had not held high office under King William—as their candidate for official favour. Sarah, as usual, was ardent in their cause. Her influence both with the Queen and with her husband was regarded as irresistible. How could that influence be more easily and more naturally exerted than in pressing the claims of her own son-in-law? Sunderland would be the thin end

## THE WHIG APPROACH

of their wedge. Behind it were the sledgehammers of action in both Houses of Parliament.

The impact of all this fell, as the months passed, upon Godolphin. He had to procure a Parliamentary majority to carry on the war. From this there was no escape. It must be there, on the benches and in the lobbies of both Houses, from day to day. Without it there would be no Supply, the armies would wither, the Grand Alliance would crumble, and the war would be lost. Since he had broken with the Tory Party and the Queen was increasingly reluctant to admit the Whigs in numbers, his task soon became arduous and ungrateful to the last degree. His days were spent in begging the Whig Junto to forbear and the Queen to concede. Marlborough understood perfectly that his colleague's vexations and anxieties at Whitehall were scarcely less wearing than his own distresses and dangers in the field. His letters breathed a lively sympathy, and again and again he assured the Lord Treasurer that he would stand or fall with him.

The idea of sending Sunderland to Vienna upon the mission of mediation between the Emperor and the Hungarian insurgents seemed to Godolphin the least difficult expedient. It was the wedge at taper-point. The Queen, relieved at not having this obnoxious politician obtruded upon her Council, accepted his employment abroad as a compromise. After all, Sunderland was Mr and Mrs Freeman's son-in-law, and surely for the sake of old friendship they would keep him in his place and out of her sight. Thus in June 1705 one of the Lords of the Junto, formally representing the power and interest of the Whigs, became an envoy of Queen Anne. This was a considerable event. A minor appointment of a young Whig Member named Walpole to the Admiralty Board attracted little notice. But further encroachments upon the Queen's peace of mind were in store. Sir Nathan Wright, the Lord Keeper, a Tory, was well known to be incompetent. His knowledge of Chancery business was woefully defective, and his praiseworthy efforts to acquaint himself late in life with the great profession of which he was the head, by studying a manual of practice compiled



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for his own use, evoked no confidence among his friends, and mockery from his foes. On the other side stood Cowper, the Whig, with far higher abilities and credentials. As the time for the meeting of Parliament approached the Whigs demanded with bluntness that Cowper should be appointed Lord Keeper. Under this pressure and that of the Parliamentary situation Godolphin recommended the change to the Queen. Anne was greatly distressed. The office of Lord Keeper was intimately concerned with Church patronage. To admit Whig influence in this sacred preserve was more than she could bear. Her letter of July 11 to Godolphin is well known.

. . . I cannot help saying I wish very much that there may be a moderate Tory found for this employment. For I must own to you I dread falling into the hands of either party, and the Whigs have had so many favours shown to them of late that I fear a very few more will put me insensibly into their power, which is what I'm sure you would not have happen no more than I. I know my dear unkind friend [Sarah] has so good an opinion of all that party that to be sure she will use all her endeavour to get you to prevail with me to put one of them into this great post, and I cannot help being apprehensive that not only she but others may be desirous to have one of the heads of them [the Junto] in possession of the Seal. But I hope in God you will never think that reasonable, for that would be an unexpressible uneasiness and mortification to me. There is nobody I can rely upon but yourself to bring me out of all my difficulties, and I do put an entire confidence in you, not doubting but you will do all you can to keep me out of the power of *the merciless men of both parties*, and to that end make choice of one for Lord Keeper that will be the likeliest to prevent that danger.<sup>1</sup>

Against this resistance Sarah strained her influence in vain. Stiff letters passed. The Queen refused. In a personal letter (now lost) she appealed to Marlborough. Marlborough's reply of September 29, from which we may infer its character, deeply disappointed her.

<sup>1</sup> Godolphin Papers; Add. MSS. 28070, f. 12.

## THE WHIG APPROACH

*Sept. 29/Oct. 10, 1705*

Your Majesty has too much goodness for your servant in but thinking of an excuse for your not writing. . . .

Not knowing when I may have the honour of seeing your Majesty, I cannot end this letter without lamenting your condition ; for I am afraid I see too plainly that you will be obliged by the heat and malice of some that would not stay in your service, to do more than otherwise would be necessary. What I say is from my heart and soul for your service ; and if I had the honour of being with you, I should beg on my knees that you would lose no time in knowing of my Lord Treasurer what is fit to be done, that you might be in a condition of carrying on the war and of opposing the extravagances of these mad people. If your Majesty should have difficulty of doing this, I see no remedy under heaven, but that of sending for Lord Rochester and Lord Nottingham, and let them take your business into their hands, the consequences of which are very much to be feared ; for I think they have neither courage nor temper enough to serve your Majesty and the nation in this difficult time, nor have they any support in England but what they have from being thought violently at the head of a party, which will have the consequence of the other party opposing them with all their strength.

As I am sure your Majesty has no thoughts but what are for the good of England, so I have no doubt but God will bless and direct you to do what may be best for yourself and for Europe.<sup>1</sup>

On this the Queen yielded, and the Great Seal was transferred to Cowper on October 11.

It was inevitable that this long, unceasing, day-to-day friction should destroy the relations between Anne and Sarah. The Queen's friend became no more than the advance agent of the Whig Party, so ardent for tangible proofs of royal favour. She not only overrated her influence on public matters with the Queen, but she mistook its character. She sought to win by argument, voluble and vociferous, written and interminable, what had hitherto been the freehold property of love. She undertook to plead every Whig demand with her mistress. For Sunderland, her son-in-law—that might be understood. There the Queen could suppose a

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, II, 235.

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personal desire which in old friendship she still wished to meet. But the acceptance of a Whig Lord Keeper, guardian of the Queen's conscience, adviser upon the Church patronage, seemed to Queen Anne not a matter for the judgment of her favourite and confidante. As for all the propaganda of Whiggery of which Sarah made herself the advocate, this only encountered an obstinacy, and in the end wore out a patience, which in conjunction were unique.

The result of the elections and its effect upon the Government manifested themselves as soon as Parliament met on October 25, and the House of Commons proceeded to choose a Speaker. The Tories put forward the pious 'tacker' Bromley, Member for Oxford University, long identified with the Occasional Conformity Bill. The Whigs found a respectable figure in a certain John Smith. The attendance was enormous for those days of difficult travel. Out of 513 Members 454 were in their places. It soon became evident that the Ministry would support Smith. Sir Edward Seymour, now desperately ill, could think of no better argument against him than that, being a Privy Councillor, he was ineligible for the Speakership. On this Hatley was able to make a rejoinder which must have been effective. Seymour himself, he recalled, had been Speaker and Privy Councillor at the same time in the reign of Charles II. Smith was elected by 249 votes to 205 for Bromley. The majority of 44 did not represent the full combined strength of the Whigs and the Government. A number of Tory placemen were either genuinely unable to believe that the Court wished a Whig Speaker to be chosen, or else resented their instructions. They voted in the wrong lobby. They made haste, with many apologies for tardiness, to set their sails to the new breeze.

The Queen's Speech dwelt upon the now familiar theme of Marlborough and Godolphin—"war abroad and peace at home."

If the French king continues master of the Spanish monarchy, the balance of power in Europe is utterly destroyed, and he will be able in a short time to ingross the trade and the wealth

## THE WHIG APPROACH

of the world. *No good Englishman* [Marlborough's phrase] could at any time be content to sit still, and acquiesce in such a prospect; and at this time we have good grounds to hope, that by the blessing of God upon our arms, and those of our allies, a good foundation is laid for restoring the monarchy of Spain to the house of Austria; the consequences of which will be not only safe and advantageous, but glorious for England.<sup>1</sup>

Such declarations went far beyond the original objects of the Grand Alliance, and proclaimed England's direct interest in the most extreme form of victory. They confirmed the arguments and assurances which Marlborough had used to the Dutch a few weeks earlier in urging them to reject the peace overtures of France. War on the greatest scale with implacable spirit for the highest demands was the message. The second main appeal was for the union with Scotland. For these high purposes the Queen called for another union—a union of men's spirits in England and the laying aside of party strife.

In every point except the last both Houses of Parliament cordially sustained the Sovereign. The addresses of the Lords and the Commons repeated the sentiments of the Queen's Speech about the war in even stronger language. They overflowed with praise for the Queen's person, her zeal for the Church, and her devotion to the harmony of her subjects. "We want words," said the Commons, "to express the deep sense we have of the many blessings we enjoy under Your Majesty's happy government."<sup>2</sup> Although both addresses were tinged with Whig censures against those whose wicked rumours that the Church was in danger had disturbed men's minds, and thus acquired a partisan character, they were carried by large majorities. The Commons then proceeded to vote unprecedented supplies of money for the war, and to make large additions to the armed forces by land and sea.

The reactions of Whig pressure upon Godolphin affected

\* <sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary History of England* (Hansard), edited by William Cobbett and J. Wright, vi (1810), 451.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vi, 455.

## MARLBOROUGH

Harley, and not only reveal the key to his future conduct, but form the true defence of his career. Harley knew the Tory Party alike in its temporary weakness and in its latent strength. He saw that it was his foundation in public life. He knew that his relations with the Queen were at this stage on an entirely different plane from those of the Cockpit circle. Godolphin and the Captain-General could perhaps, but only perhaps, afford to be careless of party attachments. That was their own affair. But Harley would never in any circumstances cut himself finally adrift from his Tory moorings. He might co-operate as an honoured colleague and as a real contributory force with a national Government such as the Queen and her two chief Ministers desired. He might even quarrel fiercely for the time being with the unreasonable elements of Toryism; but ever before his eyes there glinted the prospect of a Tory reunion at the head of which he would be no longer an agent, however indispensable, but the real, natural leader.

Therefore we find Harley from the very outset deprecating the Whig infusion. Large concessions must no doubt be made. As a House of Commons man and a master of that assembly, he recognized their practical necessity. He was prepared to give way step by step and month by month; but he meant it to be known both by the Queen and by the Tory opposition that he was a resisting force to Whig ambition. To the Queen the language he used was highly agreeable; indeed, it was her own. "Persons and parties must go to the Queen, not the Queen to them." The Queen had chosen the Tory Party as her basis. There must be no party domination, certainly no Whig domination: "If the gentlemen of England [*i.e.*, the Tory country gentlemen] are made sensible that the Queen is at the head and not a party [*i.e.*, the Whig Party] everything will be easy, and the Queen will be courted, and not a party."<sup>1</sup> In other words, Harley was prepared to serve in a national coalition provided it remained national; but he would not serve in a Whig Government veneered with Tory elements. Gradually, but at the same time decisively;

<sup>1</sup> Harley to Godolphin, September 4, 1705; Bath Papers, *H.M.C.*, i, 75.

## THE WHIG APPROACH

Harley made this fact apparent to Godolphin and Marlborough. The differences which opened between the Lord Treasurer and the Secretary of State, though at present vague and veiled, were deep. Godolphin could never go back to the Tories : Harley had never left them. Godolphin was prepared to lean upon the Whigs and rule with their aid ; Harley would never accept such a system. Godolphin sought always an effective, clear-cut majority upon which Marlborough could wage war triumphantly. Harley felt much more coolly about it all. The war would not go on for ever ; it might even end disastrously. What would happen then ? It was not his war. But it would be his Tory Party.

Nevertheless, at this stage the Whig assertion had not been pushed to such a pitch that he was seriously disturbed. On the contrary, he showed himself well disposed towards an accommodation with them. He soothed and reassured the Queen, who already found him expressing her instinctive thoughts, about the appointment of a Whig Lord Keeper. He was entirely favourable to the Sunderland mission. He it was who had tripped up Seymour in the Commons at the election of the Whig Speaker. In all this he served the Government, and at the same time made the Queen feel a certain measure of comradeship in the sacrifices which both must make for longer ends.

Their resentments now betrayed the Tory leaders into further acts of extreme unwisdom. Once again they tried by an insincere manoeuvre to entangle the Whigs, and once again they were themselves upset. Their spokesman, Haversham, put forward in the Lords a proposal that, in order to ensure the Protestant succession, the Electress Sophia should be invited to take up her residence in England.<sup>1</sup> No one knew better than Rochester and Nottingham that this suggestion was insupportable to the Queen. Yet it seemed a plan for which no Whig could refuse to vote without repudiating the whole doctrines of his party. If the Whigs endorsed it, they made a new breach with the Queen. If they refused it, they falsified their principles, and staggered their

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of the House of Lords*, xviii, II, 19.

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party. Such was the plan upon which the Tories were led into the enemy's lines masquerading in their uniforms.

This insidious form of attack naturally drew Godolphin, Harley, and the Whig lords into common consultation, and all were found equally desirous of pleasing the Queen. The political sagacity of the Junto and the discipline of their party enabled them easily to defeat the fantastic assault, and to turn it to their own advantage. They supported the Government in meeting Haversham's motion with a plain negative. The Queen herself was encouraged to be present 'incognito,' as it was called, in the House of Lords during the debate. She heard the Tory orator putting forward the project most deeply repugnant to her. Buckingham, furious at his recent dismissal, wasted little sentiment. The Queen heard him at a few yards' distance discuss the possibility of her soon being physically incapable of reigning. She heard the Whig debaters, whom she had so long regarded as her enemies, displaying all their brilliant gifts of argument and rhetoric upon her side. Never had the Whigs more nearly won the heart of Queen Anne than on this occasion. The motion was rejected by an overwhelming majority. The Queen returned to St James's with the feeling that her lifelong friends had outraged her, and her lifelong foes had come to her rescue. How profoundly shaken she was alike in her faiths and her prejudices can be judged by the letter which she wrote to Sarah.

I believe dear Mrs Freeman and I shall not disagree as we have formerly done ; for I am sensible of the services those people have done me that you have a good opinion of, and will countenance them, and am thoroughly convinced of the malice and insolence of them that you have always been speaking against.<sup>1</sup>

This royal mood might render possible the formation of a real national Government in which Harley and St John and many respectable Tories could work heartily with the Lords of the Junto, the whole under the auspices of Marlborough and Godolphin. Such a system would command ample Parliamentary strength for the vehement prosecution of

<sup>1</sup> *Account of the Conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough* (1742), p. 171.

## THE WHIG APPROACH

the war. It was plain, however, that the Whig leaders could not rest upon the mere rejection of the disingenuous Tory proposal to bring the Electress Sophia into England. Had they done so they would have been disavowed by their party. They therefore in close accord with the Government brought forward their counter-plan for assuring the Hanoverian succession should the Queen die without a natural heir. This was the Regency Bill, by which upon the demise of the Crown a Council of Regency would automatically come into existence for the express purpose of placing the Hanoverian heir upon the throne. The Queen, in her relief from what she regarded as an odious proposal of the Tories, relegated into the background of unrealizable sentiment any compunction which she nursed about the "pretended Prince of Wales." ("Maybe 'tis our brother."<sup>1</sup>) She cordially welcomed the Regency Bill. It was carried without serious difficulty. The Whig leaders reassured their party, and the Tories lay like beetles on their backs.

At this time we must imagine the Tories, morose and chagrined by what they considered the unworthy defection not only of their own men, but of their own Queen, making every conceivable blunder, while the Whigs caracoled before the throne displaying their matchless skill in political equitation, and eager to persuade its occupant to make them her champions. One final exhibition remained. The Tories came forward with their cry, "The Church in danger." Rochester, Nottingham, and the newly dismissed Buckingham set forth their threefold case. The Act of Security—which in that dark hour before the victory of Blenheim brought new life Godolphin had advised the Queen to sign—authorized the Presbyterian Government in Scotland to arm a fierce, fanatical anti-episcopalian peasantry. The Occasional Conformity Bill had been for three sessions handspiked. The invitation to the Electress Sophia had been rejected. Thus (moaned the Tories) Presbyterians and Dissenters had gained the upper hand both in England and in Scotland.

. Anne again attended as an auditor, and sat impassive through

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 272.



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eight hours of speeches, often directed at her. But neither the issue nor the ill-impression produced by the Tories upon the Queen was for a moment in doubt. Somers derided the Tory ex-Ministers. "Those lords who see the Church in danger take this view because they are excluded from office. They cannot, it seems, take their eyes off the danger, nor can the danger itself be removed until they are embraced in the Government, and an Act is passed to make their tenure of office eternal. But they are mortal: religion is immortal. The only final solution is to discover some means to make them immortal." <sup>1</sup>

Upon this question of the danger to the Church and to the episcopacy the Bishops had a rightful say. King William's bishops, still a majority, plumped for the Whigs and the Administration. By sixty-one votes to thirty the Lords declared that

the Church, which was rescued from the extremest danger by King William III, of glorious memory, is now, by God's blessing, under the happy reign of her Majesty, in a most safe and flourishing condition; and whoever goes about to suggest and insinuate that the Church is in danger under her Majesty's administration is an enemy to the Queen, the Church, and the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

The Commons at the request of the Lords made a similar declaration; and, the Queen assenting in cordial terms, it became a penal offence to speak of danger to the Church of England. Notwithstanding this threat, the country clergy and the fox-hunters continued to ingeminate their griefs with general impunity; and the pamphleteers were artful, virulent, hard to catch, and harder to convict.

<sup>1</sup> Lords Debates, II, 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the House of Lords*, xviii, II, 43.



JOHN, LORD SOMERS  
Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*By permission of David Minlore, Esq*



## CHAPTER II

### PRINCE OF MINDELHEIM

THE fruitless outcome of the campaign of 1705 in the Low Countries, the bitter controversies which it had aroused in all the camps, Courts, and Diets of Europe, and the revival of the French power on almost every front, might well have smitten Marlborough's reputation on the Continent and in consequence impaired his strength. On the contrary, he emerged more obviously than ever before as the brain and impulse of the Grand Alliance. The victories which had been denied him in the field were to be gained during the winter by his personal influence in diplomacy. If the confederacy was to bear the strain of another year's war its members must be regathered by a master-hand. There was but one, as all men could see. The island Power, which, though seemingly more detached from the struggle than its Continental allies, was making remarkable exertions, possessed in Marlborough an agent upon whom all eyes were turned, and to whose tent appeals from every quarter were addressed.

1706,  
October-  
December

Once again the fortunes of the Alliance had ebbed.<sup>1</sup> Though the fame of Blenheim still resounded, its advantages had largely disappeared. The plight of the Empire, if not immediately desperate, seemed forlorn in the last degree. The Hungarian revolt had become monstrous. It dominated the life and swallowed the public revenues of four out of five of the hereditary provinces of the Austrian crown. It was the first call upon the Emperor's men and money. The rebel leader, Rakoczy, bulked larger in the Emperor's mind than Louis XIV. The Imperial armies on the Upper Rhine and in Italy were starved for the sake of the deadly intestine conflict. The failure of Marlborough's design upon the Moselle and the lack of any victories in Brabant had wasted the superiority of the main allied army during the whole year. This

<sup>1</sup> See the general map of Europe facing p. 556.

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had enabled the French to maintain an unrelenting pressure with numerous forces upon Savoy. Nearly a hundred and fifty thousand troops were acting continuously in the Italian theatre. Victor Amadeus, the reigning Duke of Savoy, was hopelessly outnumbered. His fortresses, stubbornly defended, had fallen one by one. The genius of Prince Eugene and the terror of his name could not make good the wants of his army in numbers, munitions, equipment, and money. His hazardous battle against Vendôme at Cassano<sup>1</sup> had yielded nothing more than a momentary diversion. His ragged, unpaid, disintegrated force, of which the eight thousand Prussians whom Marlborough had procured from the Court of Berlin in the previous year, now greatly reduced, were the core, could do no more than cling to the foothills of the Alps by Lake Garda. Victor Amadeus himself was at variance with Starhemberg, the Imperial general at his side. The French under Vendôme and La Feuillade were steadily overcoming every form of resistance. The total collapse of the Allies in the Italian theatre seemed to await only the return of spring. The French conquest of all Italy was imminent, after which the whole army of the two Marshals would be speedily transported to the northern fronts.

Godolphin was anxious that Marlborough should return to England, if possible in time for the meeting of the new Parliament, and assuredly the Duke himself was longing to be home. The state into which the Grand Alliance had fallen quenched these desires. All through September a series of letters from the Emperor, from Wratislaw, and from Eugene unfolded their new distresses and implored him to come himself to Vienna, and settle there, in the distracted capital of the Hapsburgs, whatever measures were possible to meet the dreaded opening of another campaign. Sunderland, now at Vienna, wrote urgently endorsing these requests. "If he does come," he wrote to Godolphin, "there is nothing in the power of this Court that he will not persuade them to."<sup>2</sup> Marlborough seems from the first to have been sure he ought to go. He laid his plans with his customary care. In forward-

<sup>1</sup> August 16, 1705.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, ii, 225.

## PRINCE OF MINDELHEIM

ing the Emperor's appeal to Godolphin and the Cabinet he represented himself as disinclined to undertake so arduous a journey. Certainly it would not be worth while making it if he were not armed with authority first from England and then from Holland to bring effective financial and military aid to the Emperor. Unless this were forthcoming, and both the Sea Powers felt such a mission to be his unavoidable duty, he would not go. If he went so far as Vienna, he would return by the Courts of Berlin and Hanover to The Hague and reach London early in the New Year, having done what he could, and at any rate with full knowledge upon which to advise the Cabinet. Thus he made himself begged from all quarters before he committed himself to the course he desired.

At this time his thoughts were centred upon the Italian theatre. "It seems to me," he wrote to Wratislaw (October 5), "that it is high time to think seriously about this war in Italy, which employs so great a number of enemy troops, who would fall upon our backs everywhere if we were driven out of it."<sup>1</sup> His prime object was to secure money from England and Holland, and men from Prussia and the German princes, to sustain the army of Prince Eugene. It may well be that he had already in his mind a design for a decisive campaign in Italy, in which after a march longer and more adventurous than the march to the Danube he would himself join his glorious and now beloved comrade upon the plains of Lombardy for a battle that should outshine Blenheim. At any rate, he began by every means and from every quarter setting the flow of troops and supplies towards the south.

He planned his tour of Germany so as to meet every one who mattered on the way. He must visit the Elector Palatine and the authorities of the Electorate of Trèves. At Frankfort he must find d'Almelo and Davenant, the Dutch and English financial agents, and Geldermalsen, the Dutch Deputy, whose removal at least from the front he had been promised before the new campaign, but who still held his office unwitting; and here too he hoped to conciliate the Margrave, if Prince

<sup>1</sup> Sir G. Murray, *Marlborough's Letters and Dispatches* (1845), ii, 293.

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Louis's toe and temper would permit the rendezvous. To all these he wrote cordial letters specifying the business that must be transacted. Rantzau, the Prussian general, asked that his son might accompany the Duke upon his journey, and Marlborough invited the young man to join him at Ratisbon, "whence we will drop down the Danube together, and I will make it my task that his voyage shall be as agreeable to him as possible." To Stepney, the English Ambassador, he wrote :

I must entreat the liberty when I come to Vienna to set up my field bed in your house, and if you find that preparations are making to lodge me elsewhere, I pray you will let the Prince of Salm . . . know that I expect this retirement as a particular mark of the Emperor's favour, and cannot on any terms admit of being elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile he remained at his headquarters with the army until the last possible moment, "spinning out the time" by the siege of Sandvliet "so that Prince Louis may not be interrupted in his operations on the Rhine," and paying only flying visits to The Hague.

Bavaria had revolted against its conquerors of the year before. The Bavarian army had continued a local resistance after the battle of Blenheim. It had surprised and routed with heavy loss the small Imperialist force left to besiege, or rather to blockade, Ingolstadt. The treaty signed with the Electress was repugnant to the Bavarian generals, who, now that the main allied armies had left Bavaria, desired to continue fighting. It was, however, enforced throughout the country by the Munich Government, and the bulk of the Bavarian army was disarmed and disbanded, and all the fortresses, with one single exception, were garrisoned by Imperial troops. The reader will remember M. de la Colonie, the "Old Campaigner," whose account of the Schellenberg is so valuable. It was due to La Colonie that Ingolstadt alone continued its resistance. This brave officer and his regiment of French grenadiers in the Bavarian service found

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, II, 296.

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themselves forgotten in the treaty, which covered only Bavarian subjects. They were without a military status of any kind, and opinion was divided upon whether they would be shot as deserters from the Empire, or hanged for the marauding for which they were notorious, or allowed to make their way back to France as unarmed individuals, with the certainty of being massacred by the infuriated Swabian peasantry. It would have gone hard with these men if they had not held together under their resolute leader.

In their desperation they animated the resistance to the terms of the treaty of all the Bavarian troops in Ingolstadt. Thus strengthened, they held the fortress, and declared themselves resolved to perish in their bastions unless they were granted honourable safe-conduct to France. The Allies in due course protested against the breach of the treaty. The Electress from Munich declared the recalcitrant garrison mutineers; but the deadlock continued. Superior forces at length arrived before Ingolstadt, and it seemed that a bloody event was inevitable. However, Prince Eugene, returning from the siege of Landau, took the matter into his own hands. He patiently inquired into the dispute. He treated La Colonie with soldierly respect, and entertained him at his table. He decided that the soldiers were entitled to their arrears of pay, and that the French grenadiers, together with the remaining French residents, should be escorted back to Strasburg as an armed force evacuating a foreign territory with the honours of war. Accordingly, La Colonie, after several private adventures, duels, legal processes, and a marriage, found himself by the end of 1705 commanding the remnants of his regiment under the Elector in the Low Countries.

The rancours in Bavaria had not ended with the dispersal of its military forces. The Bavarian nobility and people had not shared in their Elector's guilt, but they had paid the penalty. The devastation of the countryside before Blenheim had roused a fierce, abiding hatred of the Allies. The efforts of Vienna to recruit Bavarians for the Imperial service met with sullen and often savage resistance from all classes. Disorder and bloodshed spread throughout the



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ravaged principality. The dragon's teeth had been sown, and murder and revolt sprouted everywhere.

No enemy prince had suffered more at Marlborough's hands than Max Emmanuel, Elector of Bavaria. His country had been laid waste; his armies had been destroyed in the Blenheim campaign; his remaining cavalry and personal adherents had been routed at Elixem. He was a fugitive ruler serving far from home and family in the Low Countries as a French Marshal. A crowning disaster impended upon him. But at least he must have his sport. The wild boar which infested the Forest of Soignies afforded him the prospect of a hunting season, and he wrote to Marlborough early in September asking various passport courtesies and, above all, facilities to pursue the chase undisturbed in regions which the Allies now controlled. The Duke answered on September 25 in his most ceremonious style :

Indeed I should be enchanted were it in my power to give the orders which His Highness desires to favour his hunting. When, however, he has thought the matter over carefully, he will see that it is not in my power to exempt so great a stretch of country from the movements of patrols; but as for the passports, they are at his service, and shall be couched in whatever terms he judges most convenient, there being nothing that I would not do to prove to his Electoral Highness the most submissive respect with which I have the honour to be Monseigneur's devoted, humble, and obedient servant.<sup>1</sup>

The Elector persisted, and on October 4 Marlborough expressed his "despair" not to be able to give orders forbidding his patrols to enter the Forest of Soignies.

"I flatter myself," he said,

that your Electoral Highness is convinced that if it depended upon me I should hasten with eagerness to accord everything he should ask, if only in order to mark the deference which I shall always have for his orders, begging him to do me the justice of believing that no one could be with more veneration and respect than I am Monseigneur's devoted servant.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, II, 278.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, II, 291.

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Making all allowance for the manners of the period between opposing commanders, there was more in these exchanges than their trivial topic would warrant. We have seen the distrust with which Max Emmanuel in his capacity as Vicar-General of the Netherlands was viewed at Versailles. The possibility of his making a separate peace for Belgium at the expense of France was never excluded from the French precautions. Sometimes it is convenient for public men to keep up a correspondence on slight matters with their opponents in order to preserve a certain personal intimacy and an easy approach should it become desirable. The extravagant flattery and humility with which Marlborough caressed the Elector were not only characteristic of the age and of Marlborough, but a measure of the situation, with, as we shall see, a bearing on the future.

Ailesbury has given us a picture of Marlborough at this very time more intimate than any other which his campaign records provide. The old Jacobite Earl had made repeated requests to be allowed to go back to his native land. He felt he had claims of friendship upon Marlborough dating from the Fenwick trial.<sup>1</sup> The Duke pitied his plight, liked his company, used him with tender courtesy, but was inflexible upon reasons of State. At the end of 1703 they had dined together on two nights at the Albemarle's. "The last night," says Ailesbury,

the Duke drinking to the Lord and Lady of the house to all that could give us most satisfaction, Mr Meredith [one of Marlborough's rising brigadiers], who was diverting the company and ever towards me and my wife most obliging, cried out, "My Lord, I love deeds and not words. We are here all friends and in good humour, and pray let the whole company go to England in the same ship." My poor wife, that knew better, let fall some tears, on which my Lord Marlborough said somewhat [something] obligingly, but what was taken for Court holy-water, the expression in French when Ministers say what they do not think to perform.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 463.

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Ailesbury, still eating his heart out in exile, had refused to call upon the Duke either on his return from Blenheim ("Hockster" he calls it) or in the spring of 1705. But now in October Count Oxenstiern urged him to come to Headquarters, "for that I had sufficiently mortified my Lord Marlborough for going from his promise (the year before) given to my wife." The Duke was quartered in a convent outside the gates of Tirllemont.

He supped not, so was generally alone. My host invited several of our nation to sup with me; the next morning he carried me to my Lord's, who was in business, and the Generals in chief and of the Auxiliary troops also were attending; but he sent for us two into his chamber, and, it being post-day that morning, he desired Count Oxenstiern to amuse me as well as possible until dinner time, and at his little table, a great word with him, he seldom having a great one save Sundays. He embraced me much, and made me many protestations. At dinner, sitting by me, he would continually take me by the hand, but politickly (of which he was a great master) putting his hand under the napkin. That night my Lord Orkney gave me a vast supper, and of consequence much company of all those he knew that had a regard for me; he had the hautboys of the regiment of foot-guards, and the Marquis, now Duke, of Lavalère that was at Aix, [taken] prisoner with Maréchal Tallard, had obtained by great favour liberty on his parole and permission to live in France, and out of gratitude he sent my Lord Marlborough, as Colonel of the Guards, a great number of books with the best airs, and all sorts of instruments, and of all countries, fit for hautboys, and the symphony was admirable; <sup>1</sup> and who should come in but my Lord Marlborough, with this expression (for he was not invited, as not supping), "My Lord Orkney, do not take it ill, if I say I come here for the sake of this Lord"—pointing to me. He was perfectly merry, and for him ate much and drank heartily, and we all found the effects of the excellent wine, and I never saw more mirth. The next day he asked me where I dined. I told him [at the same place] where he was [himself] [expected] to dine—at Count Oxenstiern's. "I shall not be so happy," he said, "for I am condemned to dine with base company, and shall have as base dinner." The three States Deputies of the Army had invited

<sup>1</sup> See *Dispatches*, II, 194, 308.

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him, and that year they were three sad fellows and great pedants, and continually thwarting him.

The next day we were all invited to my Lord Albemarle's at Landen. That morning Maréchal Overkirk posted his troops and auxiliaries, the left line of the army in review, and my Lord Marlborough promised to come, but, we going to see him in the morning, he entertained us and the company so long that I put him in mind of going. He whispered me in the ear that it was very indifferent to him. At last he went in his chaise for one person and one horse, and in getting up he set foot on ground again, and told me he had forgot to show me the plan of his house and gardens at Woodstock, and so went up again, and in pointing out the apartments for him and his lady, etc., laid his finger on one, and told me, "that is for you when you come and see me there"; and yet it was he that, out of policy and by a timorous temper, kept me on this side, together with my Lord Godolphin, and yet both in their hearts wished me most well.

I asked him who was his Architect (although I knew the man that was), he answered "Sir Jo. Van Brugg." On which I smiled and said, "I suppose my Lord you made choice of him because he is a professed Whig." I found he did not relish this, but he was too great a Courtier for to seem angry. It was at my tongue's end for to add that he ought as well to have made Sir Christopher Wren, the Architect, Poet Laureate. In fine, I understand but little or nothing of this matter but enough to affirm (by the plan I saw) that the house is like one mass of stone, without taste or relish.<sup>1</sup>

Sandyliet surrendered on October 29, and the armies dispersed into winter quarters thereafter. Marlborough had started on his journey on October 26. He passed through Dusseldorf on the 28th, and the next day he met the Elector Palatine. In order not to draw him from his road this prince entertained him in rustic state by the wayside. After a banquet in a tent they came to business. The States-General had tardily reached the conclusion that Count d'Aubach should be tried by a court martial for his shameful abandonment of Trèves in the spring. Marlborough had to procure the assent of the Elector, whose general Count d'Aubach was, to this process.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury*, ii, 385-387.

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More serious was the question of troops. The Duke asked that three thousand Palatines should go to Italy. The Elector would only agree that the number of his subjects in the pay of the Sea Powers should be raised from seven to ten thousand; and there for the moment the matter rested. On the 31st Marlborough, having been escorted by the notables of Trèves through the electorate, entered Frankfort under triple salutes of cannon. Here the Margrave awaited him. They had not met since the Margrave had wrecked Marlborough's campaign on the Moselle, and Marlborough had rated him before Europe. Many shrewd, anxious eyes watched the demeanour of these two captains between whom there were so many griefs, just and unjust. But all was honey-sweet. The outside world received the impression of a complete reconciliation, and Marlborough, after long closetings with D'Almelo, Davenant, and the Frankfort bankers, resumed his journey to Vienna, where he hoped to secure the Margrave's removal from the Rhine command.

At Ratisbon, which he reached on November 6, the Imperial yachts were moored. One might have thought that floating down the Danube in these sumptuous barges would have been a welcome interlude after the fatigues of the campaign, of the journey, and of such tangled affairs. But, on the contrary, Marlborough in two of his letters describes the voyage as "tedious." He landed at Vienna on the 12th. Sunderland was on the quay with Stepney and an array of Austrian magnates. A palace had been prepared for his reception, but he stuck to his plan of "setting up his field bed" at the British Embassy. He intended to transfer Stepney to another post, and it was therefore necessary to uphold this able agent in the most public manner, and make both him and the Austrians feel that his services were not undervalued by his countrymen. The young Emperor, who was still under Marlborough's spell, received him with all the honours which the tottering yet august Court could bestow. But the next day our hero was laid up with an attack of the gout, and most of the conferences took place in his bedroom:

Everything was settled as well as the bleak facts admitted.

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The first need was money ; the credit of the Empire was sunk so low that immediate local bankruptcy threatened the Austrian Government. Marlborough had to engage his private fortune with the bankers of Vienna to procure a hundred thousand crowns to pay the wages. He promised in the name of the Sea Powers a loan of £250,000 for Prince Eugene's army ; but care was taken that none of this money passed through the hands of the Imperial Court. It was eventually sent through Frankfort to a financial house in Venice and thence paid direct to the order of Prince Eugene. The Emperor explained the impossibility of removing the Margrave on account of his influence in Swabia and Franconia. Marlborough exposed to the Emperor and his Ministers the grievances of the Prussian King and the imperative need of satisfying them. The harassed Court placed their affairs in this quarter in his hands. The most delicate topic was Hungary. There had been for some weeks an armistice which Rakoczy had accepted but encroached upon, and which the Imperial generals observed only for the purpose of revictualling their isolated fortresses in rebel territory. The counsels which Marlborough had given his son-in-law at the camp on the Dyle had borne fruit : Sunderland had acquitted himself with tact and good sense. He had formed an independent opinion that the rebels were asking for more than any sovereign could give. The Whig doctrinaire and republican, whose advent had been dreaded by the Austrian Court, was now cherished. All their reproaches were directed upon Stepney ; but even these were abated. The English envoys undertook to tell the Sea Powers that the faults at this time lay with Rakoczy and that mediation was impossible.

Here we must digress upon the princely rank and principality which the late Emperor Leopold had offered Marlborough during the march to Blenheim. The Duke certainly desired this honour, extraordinary for a private person. He had procured the Queen's permission and overridden Sarah's objections with his usual skilful management. After the victory on the Danube he had made Wratislaw press the old

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Emperor to fulfil his promise, and in lengthy correspondence had made it clear that he would not take the dignity without the actual grant of lands and a seat and vote in the Diet of the Empire. When difficulties of public business arose between him and Wratislaw at the end of 1704 and thereafter, the artful Austrian more than once brought into his letters references to the principality and the trouble he was taking to meet Marlborough's wishes, as if he thought he had him on a hook. Marlborough was determined not to accept anything that was not a reality. He would not take the empty title. The promise must be redeemed in fact as well as in form. If not he would have none of it, and as soon as he perceived Wratislaw's thought he immediately brushed the whole project aside and quite curtly told the great diplomatist not to cumber their correspondence with such minor matters. Thereafter there had been a long silence upon the topic. In none of Wratislaw's lengthy letters appealing to Marlborough to come to Vienna is there the slightest suggestion that the visit would afford an occasion for imparting substance to the princely title by which Marlborough was already recognized in Europe. No one can read the correspondence without seeing how entirely Marlborough excluded his personal vanities from the great affairs he handled.

Now at Vienna the new Emperor Joseph was able to redeem his father's promise. Mindelheim, a small but *bona fide* principality, was produced. This estate had been bought by an Elector of Bavaria in the sixteenth century, and had been held more or less continuously by his successors since then. It was confiscated in 1704 from Max Emmanuel after his treachery, and effectively occupied after Blenheim. But, like other war-conquests, its fate depended on the ultimate peace treaty. The grant was made with all possible ceremony, and the princes of the Empire were summoned by Imperial rescript to meet together and accept the Englishman as a brother-prince. Even now the difficulties were not at an end. Mindelheim produced an annual income of fifteen hundred pounds; but by ancient law its yield was charged in war-time with an Imperial tax about four times as great. More-

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over, the expense of being made a prince of the Empire amounted to from twelve to fifteen thousand pounds, payable by the recipient of the honour. On this basis it was a negative gift. Marlborough, though attracted by the dignity, had equally clear views, as we have seen, upon the value of money. Archdeacon Coxe devotes an entire chapter to the laborious negotiations which followed and the stately ceremonial in which they culminated. In the upshot Marlborough was prepared to pay £4500 for his installation, but no more, and the Imperial Ministers had to arrange that the war surcharges did not apply to him, so that the net income of about fifteen hundred pounds a year was free. This might in itself be taken as a profitable though precarious return upon the Duke's capital investment.

These details being eventually settled after many months' decorous haggling, the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire assembled at Innsbrück in April 1706, and a high festival was held after the custom of ancient times with as much magnificence as Marlborough's £4500 would warrant. The King of Prussia by all his representatives, through the mouth of the valiant Prince of Anhalt-Dessau of Blenheim fame, moved that the title should descend successively to all the heirs of Marlborough's body. The princes of the Empire would not swallow this. The fact that he was without a male heir had been essential to their agreement. Marlborough the Victor they would have, if necessary, in their sacred circle; but they were disinclined to see his remote descendants taking their seats and casting their votes in the Imperial Diet.

Marlborough does not seem to have cared about this. He thought the rank was worth paying £4500 for, and probably that was about its real value to him in his relations with princely commanders. Apart from this there was the income, if realizable. It did not prove so for long. The Treaty of Utrecht restored Mindelheim to the Elector of Bavaria, provided no compensation to the Captain-General, now fallen from favour and command, and had no thought of repaying the £4500 which he had invested in his installation.



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Charles after he became Emperor seems to have had some pricks of conscience, and went out of his way in 1712 to write apologetic letters about it, which Marlborough in due course accepted with proper gratitude. The title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire has, however, descended to this day.

On November 23 Marlborough and Sunderland set out for Berlin, and such were the pains taken to smooth and speed their journey that they covered the five hundred and thirty miles in eight days in their coaches, in spite of the bad roads and winter weather. The Prussian capital was at this moment the danger-point of the Alliance. The irritation of the King expressed a grave political crisis. There never was a milestone at which Prussia had more obviously a choice. The northern war lapped her frontiers, and created problems and also opportunities which the rest of the Allies did not share. The Swedish dare-devil, Charles XII, was victorious on every side. The home lands of Brandenburg might suffer his invasion. On the other hand flickered a sinister temptation. What could resist the union of Prussian and Swedish ambitions, and of Prussian and Swedish troops? Such a revolution on the part of Prussia would overturn the historic system of Europe. It would force immediately all the Germanic princes to withdraw for their own protection not only the troops they owed to the service of the Empire, but their mercenaries serving under the Sea Powers. The grievous losses suffered by the eight thousand Prussians with Prince Eugene at the battle of Cassano had roused a natural emotion in Berlin. Their withdrawal alone meant the downfall of the Italian front against France. That these ideas were not outlawed from Prussian thoughts is evident. Against them stood the solemn veto of past ages. Deep in the heart of the Prussian state and race lay the antagonism to France. Such a desertion of the Teutonic principle spelt the triumph of the Gaul.

Surely, however, short of an act of irrevocable betrayal, there were infinite means of extorting favours from the

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wealth of England and the ancient majesty of the Empire. The raw Prussian monarchy with many troops and little money had men to sell. There was no lack in Prussia then, as in every century, of brave, docile, faithful soldiers. These, then, must be marketed on terms which would most conduce to the strength of the Prussian state. The mere withdrawal of the Prussian troops from Italy and from the Rhine would almost certainly be fatal to the Allies. But this was not so easy as it looked. It was shrewdly realized throughout the Alliance that the Prussians could not be withdrawn by a simple decision from Berlin. Without the money of the Sea Powers they could not even be fed except by rapine in the countries through which they must make their homeward march. And who would keep all these soldiers when they came home? What would they do if they were not kept? All the materials, therefore, existed for an interminable series of hagglings, bargainings, and blackmailings. In the shadows of the background lay a greater danger still.

Louis XIV, alive to all these aspects, offered recognition of the Prussian kingship and important territories, including Guelderland, merely for non-reinforcement of the Prussian troops in the allied ranks. The Czar and Augustus II of Saxony and Poland were suitors of Frederick I in other interests.

The recital of these facts shows the delicate, unpromising, and critical quest on which Marlborough must now engage himself. Nevertheless, such was the wonder and curiosity with which he was regarded by this ambitious King and his military Court that his arrival steadied the balance, and the weight of England in his hands turned the scale. The King was frankly delighted to see him again. His diplomatic ill-humour disappeared. In a week of conferences and festivities Marlborough convinced the Berlin Government that the main foe of Prussia was France, and her sure stand-by England. To achieve this he took great responsibility. He promised that if Prussian territory should be in danger anywhere England would protect it. At the general peace Queen Anne would treat the interests of Prussia as her own. He bore authority from Vienna to guarantee the assent of

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the Emperor to the conditions of the renewed treaty which he proposed. In December Prussia agreed that her contingents, raised to their full strength, should serve with the Allies in Italy and upon the Rhine during the whole of 1706. When he left for Hanover bearing with him a jewelled sword, the gift of the King, he had once again staved off for the time being the collapse of the Alliance and the loss of the war.

The Court at Hanover had been thrown into the liveliest perturbation by the news which reached them from London. The debate in the Lords on Haversham's motion produced the worst impression. That the Whigs, the sworn friends of the house of Hanover, should have joined with the Ministers of Queen Anne in rejecting so fair-seeming a Tory proposal was to these eager foreign students of our affairs incomprehensible. As is usual in small countries deeply concerned in the internal politics of a powerful ally or neighbour, the royal family and the leading politicians cultivated different sympathies, so that some of them would be good friends with whatever faction in the larger state was uppermost at any given moment. The aged Electress thus held that the Tories would prove the truest friends of the house of Hanover. Her son, the Elector, put his trust in the Whigs. The Electress now vaunted her superior judgment: the Elector deplored the inconstancy of his Whigs, and both were disgusted to the point of threatening to recall their troops by the behaviour of Queen Anne's Ministers. Both fell upon Marlborough with demands for explanations and assurances. Happily, that diligent servant had not been left unprovided with instructions from home. A letter from the Queen left no doubt upon the main point.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

Nov. 13 [1705]

The Prince is [so] very desirous of having his niece, the Princess of Denmark, married to the King of Prussia that I cannot help giving you this trouble to desire you to try if there be any hopes of bringing it to pass, for I doubt unless you can do anything towards it, it will never be compassed. . . .

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The disagreeable proposal of bringing some of the house of Hanover into England (which I have been afraid of so long) is now very near being brought into both Houses of Parliament, which gives me a great deal of uneasiness, for I am of a temper always to fear the worst. There have been assurances given that Mr Shutes<sup>1</sup> should have instructions to discourage the propositions, but as yet he has said nothing of them, which makes me fear there may be some alterations in their resolution at the Court of Hanover. I shall depend upon your friendship and kindness to set them right in notions of things here, and if they will be quiet I may be so too, or else I must expect to meet with a great many mortifications.<sup>2</sup>

With these commands arrived also the Ministerial and Whig justifications of the course they had been forced to adopt. More important still, Marlborough was furnished with the drafts of the Bills providing for a regency upon the demise of the Crown and for the British naturalization of the Electress and of all her Protestant descendants. Armed with these, Marlborough soon convinced the Elector of the fidelity of the Whigs, and the Electress Sophia of the good intentions of the Government. Some little umbrage was at first taken that a reigning German sovereign and heir-designate to the English throne should require to be naturalized like an ordinary person. But it was easy for Marlborough to show how necessary this was to meet the peculiar laws of the islanders and to place the British friends of the house of Hanover in a strong position to deal with common enemies. His personal glamour and the impression of weight, magnitude, and command which he always inspired abroad did the rest. Hanover became happy. All difficulties about the troops disappeared. Compliments and flatteries were the order of the day. Marlborough was presented with a coach and six horses, although he deemed his Blenheim coach still good enough, and Sunderland with "a set of horses." Sarah, no doubt apprised in good time, had sent the Electress a portrait of the Queen, which the old lady acknowledged in terms which left no doubt of her satisfaction :

<sup>1</sup> Schütz, the Hanoverian Agent in London.

<sup>2</sup> "This letter shews the great aversion the Queen had to the King [*sic*] of Hanover." —Sarah's endorsement. (*H.M.C.*, 8th Report, Marlborough Papers, p. 103.)

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I think that after all the kindness you have had the goodness to show me you will be pleased with my acquainting you with the joy we felt in having had my Lord Duke here in person, and in finding that his manners are as obliging and polished as his actions are glorious and admirable. I have testified to him the esteem I feel for the present you have made me of the Queen's portrait, which I prize much more than it is possible to prize that of the whole universe, which I send you in tapestry.

"The day after I came," wrote Marlborough,

I had a very long conversation with this Elector, who did not want many arguments to convince him that his and the Queen's interest were the same. He has commanded me to assure her Majesty that he will never have any thoughts but what may be agreeable to hers.<sup>1</sup>

A certain amount of irritation remained, however, beneath the surface. We find on January 1 Sir Rowland Gwynne, the English Resident in Hanover, writing an indiscreet letter to an English peer, full of bitter complaints against the Whigs, which, when it became public, both Houses declared to be a libel, ordering the printer to be mulcted. For the next six months Halifax, Somers, and other leading Whigs were occupied in making their peace with the Hanoverian Court, and trying to explain to them the intricacies of party manœuvres at Westminster. Marlborough during his three-day stay at Hanover was forced to deal with an extremely tangled dispute about the winter quarterings of the allied troops in the various electorates along the Rhine, and he settled the matter satisfactorily by eleven letters to the Electors, Bishops, Princes, Landgraves, Deputies, and other notables concerned.<sup>2</sup> Then he set out for Holland.

He reached The Hague on December 15 after a journey by coach and barge in mid-winter of nearly two thousand miles. Delayed by contrary winds and the consequent lack of battle-ship convoy, he did not arrive in London till December 31/January 11. He was weary and worn, but he had restored for the moment the cohesion of the Grand Alliance, and made the preliminary dispositions for the coming campaign.

<sup>1</sup> Cox, ii, 260-261.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 337-344.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE WAR IN SPAIN

GIBRALTAR had fallen into English hands in August 1704. It had successfully withstood Louis XIV's formidable efforts at recapture. The allied invasion from Portugal had languished. The youthful Archduke, brother of the Emperor Joseph, whom the Allies under British instigation had proclaimed King Charles III of Spain, had perforce lingered in Lisbon endeavouring to animate King Pedro II, and comforted by the indefatigable ambassador, Methuen. We have not broken the chain of events in the main theatre to describe the course of the Spanish diversion; but the curtain must now rise upon a scene where striking episodes and personages play their part.<sup>1</sup> 1705-1706

In Spain from the summer of 1705 to the autumn of 1706 the cause of the Two Crowns fell to so low an ebb that the War of the Spanish Succession seemed to be settling itself in the country primarily concerned. The failure of the large Franco-Spanish army under Marshal Tessé to recover Gibraltar at the end of 1704 had been followed by a complete lull in the Spanish war. It was throughout a war of petty armies, occasionally fighting small, fierce battles and making long marches about an enormous country in the main stony and desolate. The fortresses, ill-protected by defences or garrisons, easily changed hands. The sympathies of the countryside, however, played a serious part in the fortunes of the wandering armies, and a surge of national feeling was almost immediately decisive. So far the Allies, advancing eastward with the Portuguese, had made little or no progress. The Marquis de Ruigny, who commanded there, was one of King William's generals, a French Huguenot refugee raised to the English peerage. The Earl of Galway, to use the title by which he was henceforward known,

<sup>1</sup> See general map of Spain facing p. 556.

## MARLBOROUGH

was an heroic figure in the resistance to the tyranny and persecution of Louis XIV. He had been Deputy-General of the Huguenots. Connected by marriage to the Russells, he had acquired English nationality as early as 1688. He had commanded for King William in Ireland. He had fought in his Continental campaigns. Saint-Simon has recorded the moving story of his adventure at the battle of Landen.<sup>1</sup> His French captors, knowing that his life was forfeit, in the heat of battle refused with soldierly magnanimity to hold him prisoner. They found him a horse and set him free. He was a gallant and faithful man, and a skilful, experienced professional soldier. A contemporary record describes him as "one of the finest gentlemen in the army, with a head fitted for the Cabinet as well as the camp; is very modest, vigilant, and sincere; a man of honour and honesty, without pride or affectation; wears his own hair, is plain in his dress and manners."<sup>2</sup> His right hand had recently been shattered by a cannon-ball at the siege of Badajos, and he had henceforth to be lifted on to his horse like a child.

Marlborough had known him long and held him in the highest esteem. He had himself chosen him for the command of the Portugal expedition. Without approving some of his operations, he upheld him through the worst misfortunes. He defended his military character in strong and even passionate terms when Galway was censured by Parliament in 1711.

But now a far more brilliantly coloured personality was to enter upon the Spanish scene. Early in 1705 the English Government decided, under Marlborough's impulse, to use their sea-power in the Mediterranean. A wide latitude was necessarily accorded to the commanders of the fleet and army. Their prime purpose was to assist the Duke of Savoy upon the Riviera coast. Their second was to act in Spain, as they might decide upon the spot. The preference of the Cabinet was for the succour of the Duke of Savoy. Already Marlborough hankered for an attack upon Toulon. As early as April 1705 he described Toulon to Briançon, the Savoy envoy in London, as a main English objective.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires* (1873), i, 95.

<sup>2</sup> John Macky, quoted in *D.N.B.* (1909), xiii, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Briançon's dispatch; Pelet, v, 629.

## THE WAR IN SPAIN

slow, precarious communications forbade them to prejudge the issue from Whitehall. In order to avoid repeating the naval and military discordances which had wrecked the Cadiz enterprise in 1702, it was resolved that the general should not only command the troops, but should have equal power with the admiral in the strategic movements of the fleet. Sir Cloudesley Shovell was appointed to the naval command, and Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, became Commander-in-Chief in Spain with additional commission as Admiral, jointly with Shovell. Peterborough's appointment was delayed till Parliament had separated, as it was known to be unacceptable to both political parties.

We cannot attempt here to appraise the character and quality of one who is called by his admirers "the great Earl of Peterborough," but merely to present the reflections cast upon his memorable deeds and misdeeds by Marlborough's judgment and actions. Hoffmann reported to his Government upon him, "He is of such a temperament that he cannot brook an equal. He is a thoroughly restless and quarrelsome character, incapable of dealing with anybody, . . . and on top of that he has had no war experience on land or sea."<sup>1</sup> This seems to have been well informed. John and Sarah had known Peterborough all his life, and had tasted his malice and mischief as far back as the trial of Sir John Fenwick in 1696.<sup>2</sup> In the closing years of King William, and since the opening of the new reign, friendly and even cordial relations seemed to have subsisted between the Marlborough and Peterborough families. We have seen how Peterborough's intrepid son, the hero of the forlorn hope at the Schellenberg, had wooed but not won Marlborough's youngest daughter, Mary.<sup>3</sup> Peterborough certainly regarded the Marlboroughs, especially Sarah, as friends who rated him at his own valuation. He corresponded with the Duchess in terms of gay affability, and with the Duke with almost obsequious respect. Sarah, whose sure scent for genius had led her in her youth to marry the penniless John Churchill, and was to lead her in old age to

<sup>1</sup> Hoffmann's dispatch, April 7, Kunzel (German life of Hesse-Darmstadt), p. 555, quoted in Klopp, *Des Fall des Hauses Stuart*, xi, 489. Hoffmann was one of the two Imperial envoys in London.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 463.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. II, p. 217.



## MARLBOROUGH

bestow ten thousand pounds upon the great Pitt, then equally undistinguished, was evidently conscious of the Peterborough spell. Certainly she sang his praises to Marlborough during 1705, and Marlborough bears responsibility both for the appointment and for its exceptional conditions.

It is strange that he should have chosen a commander for Spain whose character, qualifications, and methods were so utterly different from his own. Peterborough had, as Hoffmann reported, no training as either soldier or sailor. He lacked patience, reserve, and persistency. He was quarrelsome and boastful. His caprice, or inspiration, was incalculable. His recklessness, his violence and profusion, were well known. How far, then, did Marlborough act upon his own judgment and how far did he trust himself to Sarah's instinct? At any rate, at the end of May 1705 an armada of sixty-six British and Dutch battleships, with many smaller vessels and 6500 soldiers, sailed from Portsmouth to Lisbon under the command of Peterborough and Shovell.

In issuing their orders to an expedition which once launched passed almost completely out of control the English Cabinet, guided by Marlborough, had pondered deeply upon their past experience. Although there was much friction, upon which historians have dilated, the arrangement at first worked well, and the results were splendid. All the leaders of the Allies for the war in Spain met at Lisbon in the last week of June 1705. Charles III, with his handful of personal officers, awaited them. Das Minas, the Portuguese general, and Galway rode in from the front a little beyond the Portuguese boundary. The valiant Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt, an Imperial Field-Marshal at thirty-six, came in an English frigate fresh from his six months' defence of Gibraltar. To these were now joined Peterborough, with Stanhope at his side, and Shovell, with Leake his second-in-command. This symposium of forceful, competing personalities was gathered to debate problems offering many alternatives. Their subsequent quarrels have led historians to dwell upon their differences. But the outstanding fact at the beginning is their agreement and its

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CHARLES MORDAUNT, THIRD EARL OF PETERBOROUGH

*National Portrait Gallery*



## THE WAR IN SPAIN

successful execution. Peterborough, fresh from Whitehall, leaned to the succour of Savoy. 'The Archduke, the Allies' King of Spain, naturally regarded this as desertion of his cause. He had been sent by the Allies to fight for the Spanish crown in Spain. What was this talk of Italy?

Darmstadt, as we may call him, seems first to have recommended a march on Madrid through Valencia; but he was also agreeable to an attack on Barcelona. He had defended Barcelona against the French in 1697. He had been Viceroy of Catalonia. The Catalans regarded him with gratitude and admiration. He had played a decisive part in the capture of Gibraltar, and was the soul of its defence. Whether under his influence or not, the Lisbon Council chose Barcelona as their goal. Their discussions and the necessary preparations were protracted, but at length the great fleet resumed its progress. Galway authorized the exchange of the seasoned regiments at Gibraltar for the raw English and Irish recruits, and contributed two regiments of Dragoons. All were confirmed in their resolve by a dispatch from London giving the Queen's permission for a landing in Catalonia.<sup>1</sup> Marlborough had learned from the English envoy with the Duke of Savoy, Richard Hill, that an attempt upon Toulon was not to be contemplated. He therefore relaxed his dominating control, and was content to see a Spanish venture in 1705.

On the voyage along the eastern coast of Spain the fleet touched at Denia, in Valencia. They were received with enthusiasm by the people. The magistrates of Philip V made immediate submission. All reports declared the acceptance by Valencia of the Hapsburg claim. Peterborough was excited. He saw the merit of Darmstadt's first suggestion. "Land here," he urged, "and march directly upon Madrid." The distance was but a hundred and fifty miles through easy, unravaged country. In a fortnight, he suggested, King Charles III would be enthroned in the Spanish capital. This was widely different from his previous counsel; but no one can say it was wrong. However, Darmstadt had now been rallied by Charles III to the capture of Barcelona. He

<sup>1</sup> Klopp, xi, 497.

## MARLBOROUGH

believed and protested that all Catalonia would rise to welcome him. Ultimately what he said proved true. The youthful sovereign, with the proved officer whose name seemed to be magic upon these doubtful coasts, prevailed. Peterborough, the Commander-in-Chief, submitted, and the fleet sailed northward to Barcelona. By this time there was sharp disagreement in this hydra-headed enterprise. Probably if Marlborough had been in Peterborough's shoes in the Lisbon discussions he would have refrained from advocacy of any course. He would have been content if all were agreed that the fleet, having on board the strongest possible force, should pass the Pillars of Hercules and enter the Mediterranean. He would have left the partisans of various plans to exhaust each other and so gradually transform a nominal command-in-chief into effective control. But Peterborough struck with all his force in one direction, and now, valid reasons having arisen, with equal vehemence in another. Thus he lost much power.

In the third week of August the armada anchored before Barcelona. This was the most populous and wealthy city of Spain. It was a fortress of no mean repute, tested within a decade by siege. Its fortifications could not compare with the wonderful creations of Vauban in the Low Countries. But they comprised a complete perimeter of bastioned ramparts and ditches, and the most vulnerable quarter was guarded by the strong stone star-fort of the Montjuich upon its dominating height three-quarters of a mile south of the city. The Spanish Governor, Don Velasco, was a resolute, vindictive champion of the Bourbons. He had about three thousand trustworthy soldiers under his command. On August 22 Charles III landed north of Barcelona, and was greeted and acclaimed by the Catalans, who flocked to his banner. The sympathies of Catalonia were manifestly favourable. Crowds of countryfolk and local nobility assembled to welcome him. Of armed forces only fifteen hundred Miquelets, as the Catalan rebels were called, presented themselves.

Velasco saw in the local hostility a military advantage for the defence of Barcelona. The Allies could not afford to

## THE WAR IN SPAIN

destroy their popularity with the Catalans by starving the citizens or bombarding their dwellings, still less by delivering them to storm and sack. With all these facts present in their minds also, the councils of war upon Sir Cloudesley Shovell's flagship became distracted. Charles, animated by Darmstadt, demanded a siege. Shovell supported him. No one has ever been able to plumb Peterborough's mind. Whether he was actuated by caprice and day-to-day events, or whether he prepared a profound design with all Marlborough's dissimulation, may well be indefinitely disputed. Certainly he could exert his influence most strongly by urging his Lisbon proposal to proceed at once to Italy. The armed support which Darmstadt had predicted—nay, promised—in Catalonia was lacking. The Council had rejected his own bold plan of a march from Valencia on Madrid. What hopes were there of capturing a fortified city which could not even be bombarded for fear of alienating local sympathy? Peterborough played this card for all it was worth. Thus, with a shrewdness unusual in him, he forced all his colleagues to try to conciliate him. From weakness or from craft he yielded to their wishes, but he stipulated—and all agreed—that eighteen days was to be the limit of the siege.

Accordingly the guns were landed and siege approaches made from the north side of the town, supported by sixteen thousand soldiers and sailors, mainly British. The ground was marshy and difficult, and Governor Velasco protected his ramparts at the threatened point by a preliminary lunette. No practicable breach appeared, and Peterborough continued to baffle the council of war by the alternatives of a march to Valencia and thence to Madrid, or preferably an immediate departure for Italy. After a fortnight when everything was thus in the most perfect confusion he suddenly emerged with an audacious surprise. He informed Darmstadt that he was about to assault the Montjuich. The Prince, who, according to some, had already pressed this course, was delighted. Neither of them told Charles III or the admirals of their plan till the troops were already marching.

On the evening of May 12, 1705, a thousand men, of

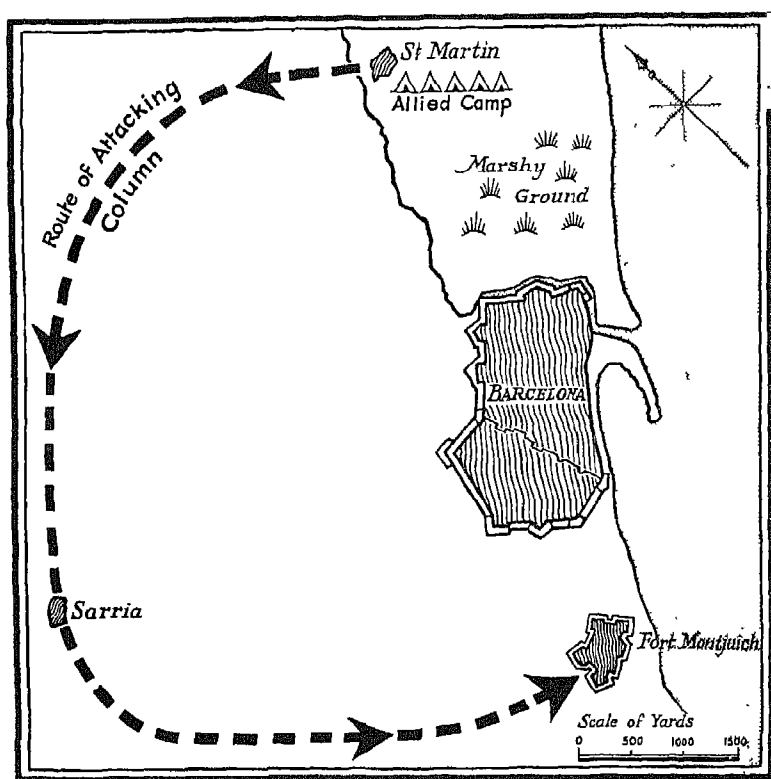
## MARLBOROUGH

whom eight hundred were English, set off under Peterborough and Darmstadt ostensibly for Tarragona, the first stage in a march southward to Valencia. A reserve of twelve hundred men under Stanhope followed later. The fleet cannon had already been re-embarked, and Governor Velasco was preparing his celebrations. Peterborough and Darmstadt marched all night by the circuitous route shown opposite on the map, and at daybreak appeared from the contrary quarter upon the most accessible side of the Montjuich. There followed a comedy of chance which was also an epic. The assailants stormed the outer works. They placed their ladders in the stone ditch, but these proved too short by seven or eight feet, and they found themselves stopped. The scanty garrison sent frantic messages for help to the city. Governor Velasco dispatched at once a hundred dragoons, each with an infantryman riding pillion. The garrison, seeing this help approaching, raised a cheer which Lord Charlemont, who commanded the British brigade, mistook as the signal for surrender. Thereupon the English leaped into the covered way, assuming themselves the victors. In this exposed situation they received a series of deadly volleys from the cannon and musketry of the fort. Many fell and two hundred surrendered. Darmstadt, hastening to intercept Velasco's reinforcement, was wounded. A bullet severed the major artery in his thigh, and in a brief space he bled to death. Aghast at this catastrophe, Charlemont's remaining men retreated. They had already abandoned the action when Peterborough, arriving, behaved in a most becoming manner. Seizing a half-pike and declaring he would conquer or die, he rallied his surviving soldiers and led them back to the outworks. This would have availed him nothing but for a curious turn of luck.

The two hundred prisoners were being hustled down the hill towards Barcelona, three-quarters of a mile away, when they met virtually the whole garrison of the city advancing to the rescue of the Montjuich. Interrogated, they admitted that both Peterborough and Darmstadt were assaulting the fort. The officer in command of the relief was staggered

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by the presence of these great personalities. He concluded that the bulk of the allied army must be with them; he therefore returned to Barcelona, and sealed its fate. By extraordinary exertions ships' cannon, relanded, were dragged into the captured outworks, and from this deadly position



THE CAPTURE OF BARCELONA

launched a bombardment which after three days compelled the commandant of the fort to surrender. The fall of the Montjuich broke the spirit of Velasco. He agreed to capitulate unless relieved within four days. Hostages were accordingly exchanged, Stanhope representing the Allies. The terms could not however be executed. The excitement of the Barcelona populace rose to an uncontrollable pitch.



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The Miquelets from the surrounding hills penetrated the city. The massacre of Bourbon adherents without respect to age, sex, or quality was imminent. The Governor invoked the aid of his hostage, Stanhope. Peterborough with strong forces entered the city while it was in wild confusion, and had the crowning and romantic satisfaction of personally saving a beautiful and terrified duchess from the fury of the mob. Even the King, who suffered so much from his arrogance, wrote to Queen Anne that Peterborough had saved the city from "a veritable blood bath."<sup>1</sup>

However it happened, Barcelona was captured. Whosoever's conception it was, whether it arose from accident, caprice, or profound design, the glory belongs to Peterborough, who lost no time in claiming it. Forthwith he sent Stanhope to England with dispatches couched in a grandiloquent vein, with letters to the Ministers, and to all his friends and his family, clamouring for praise, reinforcements, and appointment as commander-in-chief of all the forces in Spain, with sole control of the fleet.

Conflicting accounts reached Marlborough from Barcelona. On September 29 he wrote to Hedges, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department :

When the Duke of Savoy receives these dispatches, and sees how earnest the Queen is in giving him all the assistance that is possible, it will encourage H.R.H. to continue firm in the interest of the Allies, which, I believe, he must needs be sensible is his own too, though he may suffer for the present. And if the good news we have from Catalonia be confirmed, no doubt but it will have a great influence upon our affairs in Italy, and likewise in Portugal. By letters I received yesterday I am advised that the whole country had owned King Charles, and that even at Barcelona the inhabitants had taken arms to oblige the garrison to surrender, so that it was not doubted but H.M. was in possession of the city likewise.<sup>2</sup>

And three weeks later :

A great deal will depend on what we do in Catalonia, from whence the news you send me is the freshest we have that

<sup>1</sup> G. de Lambert, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, iii, 543.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 284.

## THE WAR IN SPAIN

can depend upon. The last letters from Paris of the 16th pretend that Barcelona held out still, but we have no reason to doubt our affairs going well on that side, since they tell us nothing to the contrary. We were still in hopes, till the receipt of your letters, that the news of the Prince of Darmstadt's death might not be true.<sup>1</sup>

The news of the capture of Barcelona had been hailed in London with unbridled enthusiasm. The highest opinion was held of King Charles's conduct. Godolphin was impressed by his detailed report to the Government. The English bias, especially Tory bias, was so strong for Spanish operations and for using the naval power that the capture of a fortress in Spain was judged at double the far stiffer similar prize in Flanders. Stanhope's mission met with the warmest response. Parliament presented addresses acclaiming the prowess and conduct of Peterborough. Five thousand British infantry and two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, together with a strong squadron under Byng, were eagerly devoted to the Peninsular campaign of 1706.

Success, however, had not assuaged the quarrels of the allied commanders. Everybody hated Peterborough, and Peterborough struck at all. His differences with "the Germans," or "the Vienna crew," as he described Charles III and his Imperialist advisers, soon made even formal relations difficult. "If another general," wrote Prince Lichtenstein, one of Charles's Austrian counsellors and his old tutor, (November 5, 1705), "had been in command, it would have been easy to take Majorca or Minorca, and to conquer the whole of Aragon and Valencia." He added, "All the officers under Lord Peterborough seek to leave for home. But I see no hope they will send us out a better general from England."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Peterborough himself was vociferous. "God protect this land," he wrote to Stanhope (November 18), "from even the best of the German Ministers."<sup>3</sup> Peterborough's vanity, his violence, his giddy shifts of view and of mood, made him quarrel with the young King, with the allied generals and the English admirals. Shovell had sailed

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 312.

<sup>2</sup> *Feldzüge*, Series 2, viii, 552.

<sup>3</sup> Kloppe, xi, 507.

## MARLBOROUGH

for home with most of the heavy ships. But Leake, who remained upon the coast, regarded this human firework with equal dislike and distrust. In December Charles appealed to London to send Galway from Portugal to take the command.

The effects of the fall of Barcelona and the ardour of the whole province enabled the small allied forces to become speedily masters of every stronghold in Catalonia and on the Aragon frontier. At the same time the Spanish officers whom Darmstadt with sure knowledge had selected to uphold King Charles's causes in Valencia met with unbroken success. Peterborough after several minor successes entered Valencia at the end of January 1706, and Charles was then in effective possession of all Eastern Spain with the overwhelming support of its inhabitants. These conquests—easy come and easy go though they were to prove—threw a glowing light upon the Spanish scene at the end of the year, when all else was black or grey.

Yet beneath the surface of success were causes of deep anxiety. Charles III, writing to Marlborough from Barcelona (October 22, 1705), described his condition in gloomy terms :

\* . . . We are in want of everything necessary for the war, having neither the money nor the ammunition required to defend Catalonia, which is all for us, except Rosas, . . . but the country very devoted. . . . We are in great danger, whatever Lord Peterborough's efforts may be, without prompt and extraordinary succours. . . .<sup>1</sup>

And Peterborough, amid his gay diversions in Valencia, was himself under no illusions.

### *Peterborough to Marlborough*

VALENCIA  
3 February, 1706

\*MY LORD,

How long we can resist such odds I know not. It is very uncomfortable to receive no letter this four months. My Lord, it is a hard shift I am put to to sustain a war against French

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

## THE WAR IN SPAIN

Generals and French troops with a Spanish horse—the best that be seen anywhere—without troops, without baggage, without money, in a country without an Officer speaking the language but myself. . . . The greatest honours imaginable have been paid in Valencia to the Queen, and we have been received with unexpressible marks of joy. I think we have deserved to some degree the kindness they have expressed. Under all fatigues I endure and dangers I undergo my comfort is that I have done my duty and that I am confident I shall continue to do so. I wish My Lord a happy campaign. I believe Your Grace has had a good winter one, and I hope whenever we are overpowered the enemy shall pay a reasonable reckoning. It is a great pity, My Lord, that we should have made such false steps as those I have given much account of, and that we must languish so long without relief or support.<sup>1</sup>

The active prosecution of the war in the Peninsula had really sprung from English Parliamentary circles. The Cabinet and Marlborough became conscious of a strong impulse of support for this theatre. They yielded somewhat easily to a genial breeze. Many writers have censured the dispersion of forces as improvident and unorthodox. There is no doubt that Marlborough was influenced by politics rather than by strategy in the tolerance, and more than tolerance, which he showed to the Spanish venture. Still, he could have cited facts and figures in deprecation if not in defence. The English expenditure in the Low Countries in 1706 was £1,366,000 and in Spain no less than £1,093,071.<sup>2</sup> The number of English troops, apart from those in English pay, sent to Spain was above ten thousand. On the other hand, the French had at least fifteen thousand regular troops in the Peninsula during 1706, and eighteen thousand in 1707. Whether, if there had been no war in Spain, Marlborough could have gained these troops for Flanders is more than doubtful. Probably if they had not fought there they would never have been granted him. Fighting there, they actually contained through the ups and downs of three critical years superior numbers

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Accounts of James Brydges*. Cf. G. M. Trevelyan, *Ramillies and the union with Scotland*, p. 159 n.

## MARLBOROUGH

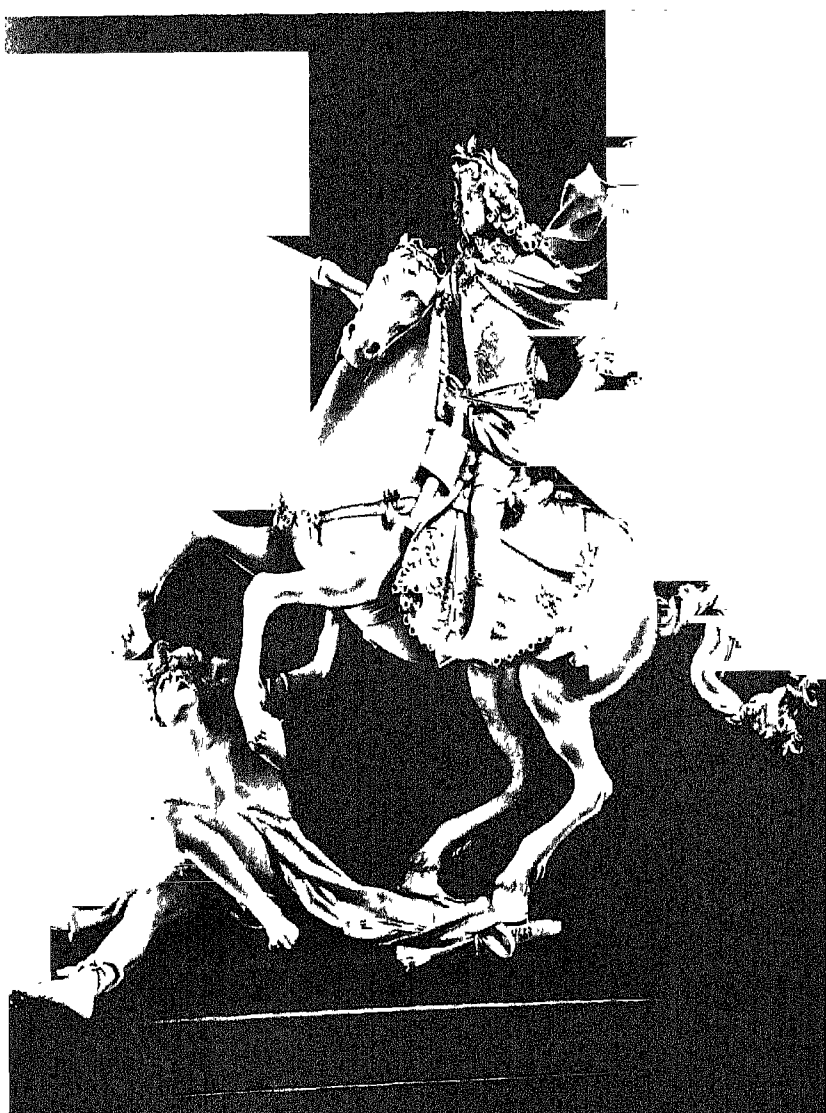
of the enemy. We feel sure that he regarded all troops sent to Spain as a concession to London opinion. He would have rejoiced to have them in his own hand. Nevertheless, they were by no means wasted in the general application of available forces. A substantial military compensation, apart from political convenience, could be adduced in the grim account. When we deplore the absence of ten thousand redcoats from the campaigns of Ramillies and Oudenarde, and all the extra weight that this would have given to Marlborough's control over the main confederate army, we are by no means entitled to assume that this alternative was ever open to him.

The attitude of the Emperor Joseph was different. He had a natural sympathy for his brother in his trials. But the sending of the young Archduke to the Peninsula was a London and not a Vienna plan. It was not until after the capture of Barcelona that a surge of enthusiasm for the effort in Spain rose in the Emperor's heart. Certainly thenceforward he was deeply moved. In a dispatch to Gallas<sup>1</sup> in London (December 23, 1705) he offered to provide troops for Spain, and urged that transport, and of course money, should be furnished by England. He would even, so Gallas was instructed to state, pawn his own jewellery rather than allow Charles's life and honour to be cast away.<sup>2</sup>

But—and on this point all opinions converged—Peterborough must be removed, and if possible Galway appointed in his stead.

<sup>1</sup> Hoffmann's colleague in London.

<sup>2</sup> From Gallas's family archives in Prague; Klopp, xi, 509.



THE EMPEROR JOSEPH I  
Matthaus Steidl  
*Kunsthistorisches M · V ·*



## CHAPTER IV

### THE TOTTERING ALLIANCE

EVER since the disaster of Blenheim Louis XIV had 1705-1706 been anxiously seeking by this road and that for a peace based on compromise. He no longer sought victory; but until the beginning of 1709 he hoped to escape a treaty of absolute defeat. In its military and financial weakness the Empire claimed the most from the war; in its strength and ardour England sought the least. The Dutch occupied the decisive position; they maintained the largest army in the field; they made a substantial money contribution; they played their part at sea. Nevertheless, their aims were practical and compact. They wanted their barrier of Belgian fortresses, with as many French fortresses to broaden it as possible. They hoped for a barrier on their southern and south-eastern frontiers stronger than that which they had so incontinently lost in 1701. The article of the original treaty of the Grand Alliance, while deliberately vague upon the question of the sovereignty of Belgium, was explicit about its strategic destiny. The Spanish Netherlands must be recovered "to the end that they may serve as a dyke, rampart and barrier to separate and keep France at a distance from the United Netherlands."<sup>1</sup> After Blenheim at various times, through successive agents, Louis XIV intimated secretly to the Dutch that he was willing to partition Belgium and divide its fortresses with them.

At the end of 1705 the French negotiations, hitherto intangible, took a more definite form. The Marquis d'Alègre, a French Lieutenant-General, had been captured by the Scots Greys in Marlborough's cavalry charge after the forcing of the Lines of Brabant in July 1705.<sup>2</sup> To this high personage

<sup>1</sup> Treaty of the Grand Alliance, Clause V; Lambetty, i, 620-628.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II, p. 569.



## MARLBOROUGH

the Duke granted a parole of two months to settle his affairs in France, and charged him to convey to Louis XIV a message of ceremony. Arrived at Versailles, d'Alègre was taken into Torcy's confidence and became a secret emissary of peace. The instructions which were given him deserve particular attention.<sup>1</sup> On his return to Holland at the expiry of his parole he was to seek out Marlborough, express the pleasure with which the King had received his compliments, and, if permitted, open decisively the question of peace. D'Alègre was to dwell upon the vexations Marlborough was bound to suffer at the hands of the Dutch, upon the hazards of war, and the many shifts and insecurities of private fortune. How success, however brilliant, brought envy in its train; how often ingratitude alone repaid the efforts of great servants; how peace would consolidate the glories which Marlborough had gained; and how earnestly the King desired that just and lasting peace. If these overtures were well received by Marlborough, d'Alègre was to broach a very delicate topic. So ardent was his Majesty for peace that he would bestow a kingly reward on anyone who could bring it about. "It might perhaps have been wished," d'Alègre was instructed to say,

that the Duke of Marlborough had not already received all the honours which have been bestowed upon him, in order that there might be room for his Majesty to offer him, after the peace, rewards worthy of a man of his standing. Since he possesses them all, the King has no resource but munificence: but whatever benefits he had received from his own sovereign, two millions of French livres [about £300,000] would raise him above the dangers to which eminence is always exposed in England, if not sustained by great wealth.<sup>2</sup>

It was further suggested that the payments should be spread over the first four years after the Peace. If all this went down well with Marlborough, and d'Alègre sustained no

<sup>1</sup> "Instructions pour d'Alègre," October 6, 1705; *Instructions des Ambassadeurs de France*, "Hollende," II, 131 *et seq* (ed. André and Bourgeois).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

## THE TOTTERING ALLIANCE

rebuff, he was then to outline the actual terms on which the King would treat.

These were curious, and widely different from all later versions. Philip V was to keep Spain and the Indies, also the Milanese. Charles III was to become, as an Archduke, Elector of Bavaria, thus strengthening the house of Hapsburg exactly where it had been most imperilled. Max Emmanuel was to be indemnified for the loss of his native land, Bavaria, and for abandoning his Vicar-Generalship of the Spanish Netherlands, by becoming king of the "Two Sicilies." France was to hold all the bridgeheads on the Upper Rhine. Holland was to have her Barrier fortresses, to be held by Swiss garrisons, and the full possession of Guelders and Limburg. The Duke of Lorraine, whose balancing attitude during the campaign of 1705 had been noticeable, was to be consoled for French acquisitions on the Rhine by the Vicar-Generalship of such parts of the Spanish Netherlands as remained after the Dutch claims had been met. This French proposal contemplated for the first time since the outbreak of the war the division of the Spanish inheritance. Nevertheless, it was a French peace. The Great King paid his debt to Max Emmanuel, but held him in his power. He maintained his grandson in Spain. He kept his grip on Northern Italy.

All this was set forth in Torcy's instructions to d'Alègre of October 5, 1705, but we have no record of what passed at d'Alègre's interview with Marlborough. It is, however, certain from the sequel that the Duke allowed the captive peace agent to unfold the whole story. Imperturbably he listened to the proposal of a vast bribe to himself, and thereafter to the French terms for a general peace. He must have been all smiles to d'Alègre, who departed without an inkling of where Marlborough stood. Clearly Marlborough was not at all attracted by the French peace proposal. He did not think that the French power was as yet sufficiently broken to give England the security which she needed and deserved. He doubted the French sincerity in view of their great remaining military strength and the disappointing close of his

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late campaign. He suspected a manœuvre to spread disunion between the Allies. He was resolved to continue the war and bring France low. When d'Alègre unfolded four days later his peace terms to Heinsius, Marlborough set himself to discredit and frustrate them. He was neither offended nor seduced by the personal bribe. He put it by in his mind as something which might be of interest some day, but which could not in the slightest degree affect his judgment or his action.

The political scene in London seemed vastly better than any the Captain-General and the Lord Treasurer had known before ; and probably the first three months of 1706, which he spent in England, were not merely comfortable, but even gave the illusion of security. He was cordially thanked by both Houses of Parliament. Extraordinary supplies were forthcoming for the prosecution of the war. The loan of £250,000 which he floated in the City for the Empire, or rather for Prince Eugene and his army, to whom it was conveyed direct, was fully subscribed between a Thursday and the following Tuesday. The war effort of the island in men and munitions each month assumed a larger scale. He was thus able to turn his mind very definitely to the new audacious military adventure on which he had set his heart for 1706. Meanwhile he cultivated the Whigs.

Many accounts have come to us of a dinner-party which seemed to seal an all-powerful confederacy in British politics. It is remarkable in this period that, while opposing commanders in the field lavished courtesies upon each other across the lines of actual war, the politicians at home adopted a stiffer attitude in their own circles. Nevertheless, in January 1706 we see united round Harley's table Marlborough and Godolphin ; Harley and St John ; Halifax, Sunderland, Boyle, and Cowper. Somers was absent only by inadvertence. An incident of this festivity recorded by Cowper is well known. On the departure of Lord Godolphin,

Harley took a glass, and drank to love and friendship, and everlasting union, and wished he had more Tokay to drink it in ;

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we had drank two bottles good, but thick. I replied, his white Lisbon was best to drink it in, being very *clear*. I suppose he apprehended it (as I observed most of the company did) to relate to that humour of his, which was never to deal clearly or openly; but always with reserve, if not dissimulation, or rather simulation; and to love tricks even where not necessary, but from an inward satisfaction he took in applauding his own cunning. If ever man was born under the necessity of being a knave, he was.<sup>1</sup>

Historians generally have taken this statement as illustrating the distrust which undoubtedly still prevailed. But that chaff of this kind could be indulged in without offence is surely a measure of prevailing sincerity and goodwill. Undoubtedly the Whigs expected to be partners in the Government. Marlborough and Godolphin earnestly desired their aid. Even Harley was caught by the enthusiasm of the hour. Only one obstacle remained—Queen Anne.

The end of this session saw the furthest unbending of Queen Anne to the Whigs. The Tory Party had driven her far from her innate convictions. Godolphin, whose whole aim was the prosecution of the war and the sustaining of Marlborough and his armies, might be truly thankful. Harley, while thoroughly helpful, had made a special virtue of going so far. The curious, intricate machine of English politics worked more smoothly for practical ends than it had ever done. Out of the innumerable stresses and intrigues there arose a spell of commanding harmony. Never had domestic affairs conformed more perfectly to Marlborough's ideals than at this beginning of 1706. It was too good to be true, and it was too good to last. Well might Seymour warn a group of Whigs who were exulting in his presence upon the triumph of their party, "Don't be too sure. Whatever the Queen may look like to you, she never hated you more."<sup>2</sup> But while it lasted the sun shone brightly upon the English scene, and the island Power could plunge again with united authority into the murk and storm of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> *The Private Diary of William, First Earl Cowper* (Roxburgh Club, 1833), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Hoffmann's dispatch, December 22, 1705; Klopp, xii, 18.

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On the Continent in the ranks of the Grand Alliance all was again turning to chaos. The agreements Marlborough had made with the allied princes and sovereigns threatened to crumble as soon as his personal influence was withdrawn from the various Courts. All the Electors saw the chance of making money and local advantage out of the weakness of the great confederacy and out of the astonishing readiness of England to make exertions far beyond her apparent <sup>strength</sup>. No doubt each had ground for complaint. Every sign had entered the war upon the promise that the Empire maintain a hundred and twenty thousand men against any <sup>army</sup>. Actually about forty thousand men, ill-drawn before <sup>se</sup> equipped, unpaid, the bulk under the now <sup>which</sup> he spelling Margrave of Baden, were all that was forth <sup>com</sup> came. The Empire, deemed so mighty, had in fact fallen down. The thoughts of Vienna were riveted upon the civil war in Hungary and Transylvania. Compared to these terrible and near obsessions, dominion over Italy, Spain, and the New World became now a faint and far-off thing.

The Prussian extortions and threats had not hitherto implied any serious resolve to change sides. But in the early months of 1706 the behaviour of Frederick I began to excite Marlborough's anxiety. There are indications in his letters that he feared his positive desertion of the common cause. He suspected him of being actually in negotiation with Louis XIV. Marlborough's letters cite no proofs. We have adduced many evidences of the excellence of his secret service, but it may well be that in this he was guided mainly by his instinct. Certainly the English Cabinet do not seem to have been themselves at all alarmed. Modern research has, however, shown how truly Marlborough divined or measured facts, for, as we now know, the Prussian King was advancing far on the path of treachery. Indeed, it is doubtful whether anything but an overwhelming military event could at this juncture have kept him from a separate peace with France.

Next in importance were the Danes. Thirty thousand Danish troops served as mercenaries in the allied armies.

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They earned an invaluable revenue for the Danish State. These good soldiers who never failed on any battlefield had also to be marketed by their rulers. Denmark had been led to seize the town of Eutin, and this raised dangerous questions not only with the Swedes, but with the Empire. Meanwhile, the payments of the Sea Powers for the Danish troops being in arrear, those warriors became tardy in moving up to their necessary strategic positions.

These political situations were aggravated by the actual state of the fronts. Spain was an adventure, costly, precarious, and on the whole ill-judged. But Italy was capital. There French armies, almost equal to those in Flanders and upon the Rhine, advanced against the exhausted Imperialists and the desperate remnants of Savoy. The year opened with the capture of Nice on January 4 after a siege of some weeks by a detachment of seven thousand men under the Duke of Berwick. By the express orders of Louis XIV the fortifications were destroyed. So thoroughly was this executed, says Berwick, "that no trace remained where the fortress of Nice had once stood."<sup>1</sup> Thus Victor Amadeus found himself cut from any effective contact with the Allies by sea. While their armies used ruthless force, the French lavished their seductions upon the harassed Duke of Savoy. His wife and his daughters were princesses of France.<sup>2</sup> The Grand Monarch could forgive his own family without loss of dignity. Let the Duke once more turn his coat, however tattered, and the parable of the Prodigal Son would be re-enacted. Victor Amadeus was made of stubborn if untrustworthy stuff. It was plain, however, in February and March of 1706 that the complete extinction of all resistance to France in Italy was imminent.

Against all these dangers and incoherences there remained to the Allies the greatness of their cause, which still held good in spite of every disappointment and disloyalty throughout the whole vague, vast block of the Germanic peoples. There

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, i, 194

<sup>2</sup> His wife was Anna of Orleans, daughter of Charles II's sister. His daughters were Marie Adelaide, who married the Duke of Burgundy, and Marie Louise, who married Philip V.

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were the sturdy, stubborn Dutch, and the rich, busy, and strangely resolute English; there was Prince Eugene, the hero of a Europe which had been for nearly twenty years at war; and lastly there was John, Duke of Marlborough, deemed by all in those days to be the Champion. By a ceaseless correspondence, obstructed sometimes for several weeks by adverse winds in the Narrow Seas, Marlborough worked untiringly to prevent the transient harmony which his personal journey had achieved from falling into ruin. The seventy pages of his letters to high personages which Murray's *Dispatches* contains for these ten or twelve weeks must be read by those who wish to understand his difficulties and exertions. Now the new, fierce campaign was about to begin. The eight French armies were already almost gathered upon their respective fronts. Every promise of the German states had been at the best half kept; all the contingents were weaker and later than arranged. Every single ally had his special complaint. The Empire, the most helpless, the most failing, was the most arrogant and querulous of all. The Margrave maundered over a mouldering army on the Rhine. The King of Prussia held all his troops back from the fighting fronts to which it had been agreed they should march. The Danes, even after their Eutin incursion had been adjusted, were set upon their arrears of pay. England was the milch-cow of all, and Parliament was already voluble upon that pregnant point. But England, detached yet dominant in the distracted Continent, was still resolved upon war and victory. She was to have both.

D'Alègre had lingered in Holland, hopeful of his peace mission and reluctant to face the rigours of captivity and the English climate. When all was ready for the new campaign his presence at The Hague was no longer desirable. "Since we have no more business to do together," wrote Heinsius (February 19), "it would be better that he should leave."<sup>1</sup> On his arrival in England at the end of March he found himself

<sup>1</sup> G. G. Vreede, *Correspondance diplomatique et militaire de Marlborough, de Heinsius, etc.* (1850), p. 3.

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reduced effectively to the position of a prisoner of war by the following characteristic letter from Marlborough, which marked the extinction of his mission :

WINDSOR PARK

March 29, 1706

Colonel Macartney, having gone yesterday evening to Windsor and having apprised the Queen of your safe arrival, has this morning informed me that her Majesty wishes you to start to-morrow for Nottingham. I am truly sorry to be out of town and thus deprived of the pleasure of saluting you. I will however send this evening M. Cardonnel [le Sieur Cardonnel] to receive your instructions, begging you to be persuaded of the very sincere feelings with which I have the honour to be, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The whisperings of peace which d'Alègre had begun continued while the armies were being painfully gathered from intriguing Courts and war-worn peoples. Two separate lines of discussion persisted. Apart from the more general objects of the war, England had a special reason for courting the Dutch. Queen Anne's Ministers and Parliaments of every hue, especially before the Union with Scotland was achieved, centred their desires upon securing a Dutch guarantee of the Protestant Succession. This could not in English opinion be secured, nor their effort repaid, until France was thoroughly beaten. They were therefore wont to encourage the Dutch to gain their Barrier by a vigorous combined prosecution of the war ; while Louis XIV tempted them at least with a large portion of it as the reward of a speedy, and if necessary a separate, peace. These two opposite winds blew for several years alternately upon Holland according to the varying fortunes of the armies. Marlborough knew well that the Dutch claims would be exorbitant ; that, whatever the London Cabinet might feel, they would deeply offend the Empire ; and that the heavy hand of " Their High Mightinesses " would infuriate all parts of the Netherlands that might fall under their rule. He foresaw also the complications which must arise with Prussia and other signatory states of the Grand Alliance concerned with the

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 464.



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Lower Rhine. We find him, therefore, dilatory and obstructive in all that concerned the Barrier Treaty, and in fact he staved it off till after Malplaquet.

The idea of the reciprocal guarantee of the war-aims of the two Sea Powers, as a preliminary to a draft of general peace terms, grew steadily in England. The Whigs, naturally attaching the highest importance to anything assuring the Protestant Succession, were prepared to go almost all lengths to meet the Dutch over their Barrier. As it was already necessary to carry them along, Halifax was at Marlborough's wish associated with him in all the preliminary negotiations. When at length, at the beginning of April, it became imperative that Marlborough should return to The Hague and to the army, Halifax went with him. We do not need at this stage to enter upon the details of the Anglo-Dutch discussions, which did not reach a settlement till the end of 1709. It is sufficient here to indicate the very different angles from which Marlborough and Halifax approached their common task. Halifax in one of his regular letters to his party leader, Somers, neither being at the time a Minister, wrote, "I think it is our interest that their Barrier should be as good as we can obtain for them, and if they insist on too much, it will be a greater tie on them not to make peace until it is procured for them."<sup>1</sup> He thought from his talks with Marlborough that the Duke agreed with this. It is probable, however, that, whatever civilities Marlborough may have practised towards the eminent Whig, his opinion was not different from what he expressed three years later in his well-known letter to Godolphin: "Be assured that whenever England shall comply with the States as to the Barrier . . . they will think it more their interest to be well with France than with England."<sup>2</sup> Two more contrary opinions could hardly be expressed, and it must be noted that Marlborough's view of the Dutch reaction was not borne out in different circumstances by the ultimate result.

Their differences did not emerge in public. The two

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in R. Geikie and I. A. Montgomery, *The Dutch Barrier, 1705-19*, p. 46 n.

<sup>2</sup> August 1709, Coxe, iv, 409.

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envoys were not long together at The Hague. Marlborough had very soon to take the field. Except for a month's stay in Hanover in the Whig interest and for occasional visits to Marlborough's headquarters, Halifax remained throughout the year at The Hague in parley with the Dutch. His negotiations were soon to be affected by events.

The Bourbon power in Spain had sunk to its lowest ebb at the end of 1705, but a stern rally marked the opening months of 1706. Louis XIV refused to accept the sudden change of fortune in the Peninsula. He was deeply conscious of the danger to his interests in the Western Mediterranean which arose from the capture by the Sea Powers of the fortified naval base of Barcelona. Just as at the end of 1704 he had sent a great army to recover Gibraltar, so now he exerted himself to recover the Catalonian capital. Tessé, with all the French troops confronting Galway, about twelve thousand men, was moved into Aragon. Arrived there, he was ordered, in spite of his misgivings, to drop his communications and march on Barcelona. Here he met the new reinforcements from France, and found himself at the head of twenty-one thousand men, two-thirds of whom were French regulars. This concentrated army outnumbered all the allied formations dispersed throughout the conquered provinces. It lay however in the midst of a bitterly hostile population. It could be fed and supplied only from the sea. A comprehensive plan was framed. The Toulon fleet carrying the munitions and cannon for the siege reached the coast in the first days of April, and, in perfect timing with the junction of all the forces, Philip V arrived in the camp from Madrid.

This sudden apparition completely turned the tables upon the Allies. Peterborough's troops were widely scattered, the bulk being in the province of Valencia, in whose pleasant cities their commander had disported himself with the gallantry and profusion of a knight-errant. Charles, menaced and invested both by land and sea, threw himself into Barcelona with four thousand men, of whom one-third were

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English. The second siege of Barcelona began. Marshal Tessé not unnaturally regarded Montjuich as the key of the city. He hoped in his turn to carry it by assault. The defence of the famous fort was confided to seven hundred English redcoats under Lord Donegal. It was necessary to use against them the heavy batteries and the greater part of the French army. At nightfall on the 21st the breach was stormed by overwhelming numbers, and Donegal, refusing all quarter, and striking down his foes on every side, perished gloriously, sword in hand, with the greater part of his men. The attack on the city now began in earnest. Aided by the fidelity of five thousand citizen levies, the young King Charles—he was but twenty-one—conducted the defence with conspicuous personal valour. Donegal's stubborn resistance in the Montjuich had given time for the population to strengthen the ramparts. A bitter conflict ensued. This was the great episode in the career of the future Emperor. Although he could easily have quitted the city by sea in the early days, he proclaimed his resolve to conquer or die among his ardent Catalans. His death in action, and still more his capture alive, would have violently transformed the whole policy of the Grand Alliance.

Almost everything about Peterborough is disputed. A sombre writer of Victorian times, Colonel Parnell,<sup>1</sup> has, with remarkable erudition, laboured to strip him of all his laurels and to represent him only as a nuisance and impostor. These aspersions are still deemed extravagant and unjust. But certainly Peterborough's conduct at this crisis shows him at his worst. On March 30, when the French design upon Barcelona was fully apparent, he wrote a letter to Duke Victor Amadeus of Savoy which reveals the black treachery of his mood.

May God preserve his Majesty, . . . but it is my duty to your Royal Highness that in case of his death *I shall give Spain to he who has the right to it*. . . . The most fatal event for the public will be a captive King of Spain. The game will be difficult and delicate, and I can only say that I will do my best; . . . for your

<sup>1</sup> *The War of the Succession in Spain (1702-11)*.

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interests, Monseigneur, will always be [illegible: paramount?] and your Royal Highness cannot wish for a more devoted or faithful servant.<sup>1</sup>

To this limit did he push his personal feuds and public presumption.

Alike in thought and action he proved himself utterly indifferent to the fate of the sovereign in whose interest he had been sent to Spain. He seemed prepared to face the loss of Barcelona. Admiral Leake, reinforced by Byng's squadron and transports carrying five thousand men, was now sailing up the coast from Gibraltar to the relief of the city. Peterborough, asserting his commission as a joint-admiral of superior rank, sent him reiterated orders to land his troops in Valencia before engaging the Toulon fleet. "Any forces sent to Barcelona are sent so far out of the way." He wished himself to march from Valencia to Madrid and seize the capital, as an offset to the fall of Barcelona.

Leake treated Peterborough's thrice-reiterated orders with perfect disdain. He pressed his voyage to Barcelona with the utmost speed. King Charles from the beleaguered city sent him imperative appeals to hasten "without stopping or disembarking the forces elsewhere, as some other Persons may pretend to direct you; for there can be no one so necessary in this town, which is on the very point of being lost for want of relief."<sup>2</sup> Peterborough, finding his orders disobeyed, and beginning to be at length conscious of the storm that would break upon him if Barcelona fell, gathered a small force, hastened along the coast, and joined Cifuentes, the Miquelet leader, in the blockade of Tessé's army. When the fleet, delayed by adverse winds, drew near, he boarded the flagship, hoisted his admiral's flag at the mainmast, and sought to present himself as the saviour of the city and the organizer of its relief. No one could have behaved worse. The whole credit belongs to Admiral Leake.

The Toulon fleet did not accept Leake's proffered battle. On the approach of his superior forces their admiral, the Count

<sup>1</sup> Add. MSS. 28057, ff. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup> Parnell, p. 166.

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of Toulouse, sailed without loitering for Toulon. Tessé, whose land communications were cut and himself blockaded by the Catalan bands, had no choice but immediate retreat. Leaving his whole siege-train, all his cannon, stores, supplies, and the bulk of his wounded, he withdrew, harassed by the guerrillas, northward into France. Such was the first refreshing news which greeted the allied captains at the opening of the main campaign of 1706.

## CHAPTER V

### FORTUNE'S GIFT

MARLBOROUGH had reached The Hague full of a <sup>1706,</sup> great military design. Our chief source for this <sup>May</sup> is in the letters which he wrote after it had been decisively prevented. But there is ample evidence how far he had carried his plan for marching all round France into Italy. For months past he had been setting everything in motion to that end. There were the eight thousand Prussians who were anyhow to stay in Italy. There were the seven thousand Palatines and three thousand Saxe-Gothas. There was the English Government subsidy of three hundred thousand crowns, there was the £250,000 loan, both of which were payable only to Prince Eugene's account in Venice. Well-equipped in the Italian theatre would stand Eugene, and thither Marlborough would march with the renowned red-coats and such other contingents as he could scrape. We can see to what point his actual staff work had proceeded by the issue of the six hand-mills to every British battalion for grinding corn, utensils which had never been needed in the Low Countries.<sup>1</sup> He had procured the assent of the Cabinet, and was now strong enough to have his plan embodied in a solemn commission from the Queen authorizing him to act, if he thought fit, independently of the Dutch.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Captain Robert Parker, *Memoirs* (1746), pp. 108, 109.

<sup>2</sup> The document is as follows. The original, with signature and seal, is in the Queen's hand.

*April 14/25, 1706*

*Additional Instructions for our Right Trusty and Right intirely beloved cousin and counsellour John Duke of Marlborough our ambassador extraordinary to the States Generall of the United Provinces and captain General of our Forces &c. ; Given at our court at Kensington the fourteenth day of April 1706, in the fifth year of our Reigne.*

Whereas we have by our instructions to you bearing date the tenth day of April in the fifth year of our reign given you our directions to press the States Generall of the United Provinces with the utmost earnestness to joyne their proportion of forces with

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Armed with this vigorous document, he now opened the matter boldly at The Hague. The States-General showed much more imagination and confidence than they had done in 1704. Their terms were simple. If he went he must take no Dutch troops: that would cost them their lives at the hands of the Dutch populace. But for the rest they would run all risks to help him. He had already directed eighteen thousand men upon the Italian theatre. If with twenty thousand English, who were to make another long pilgrimage, and certain auxiliaries of quality he could reach Lombardy, he and Eugene might do a deed the fruits whereof would be inestimable and the fame immortal.

To take the pressure off the Dutch, while he was fighting in Italy, Marlborough had resolved upon an important diversion. A French refugee, the Comte de Guiscard, a man whose dark and explosive nature was armed with much address, had for many months past pressed upon the London Cabinet a plan for the landing of a strong force upon the coasts of France far behind the fortress barrier of the Low Countries. St John was much impressed

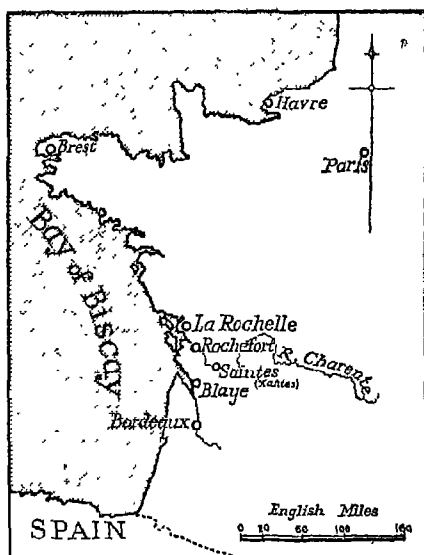
ours for the compleating forty squadrons and forty battalions to march forthwith into Italy, for the effectuall carrying on of the warr there, and the relief of H.R.H. the Duke of Savoy; which service we take to be of the last importance to the common cause, And altho' we will not permit our selves to doubt of the concurrence of that Government in so reasonable and so necessary a proposition, yet the consideration that we are not only obliged in justice to do this, but also we are mov'd by the thoughts of the fatal consequences which would befall the whole confederacy in case the French prevail there, and that the warr on our part be not effectually carried on. That we might not, therefore, be wanting to do our utmost for this necessary and important service; we do hereby require you, upon the refusal or delay of the States General, or their ministers to joyne with us in ordering a proportion of their troops for that service; that you do, in such time and manner as you shal think most proper, cause to march into Italy of the troops in our pay as near the said number of forty squadrons and forty battalions as you can possibly provide. And that you take the proper methods for concealing the said designe and also that you give al the necessary directions for the time and manner of the said march of our troops and for making provision for them in their march, and after they arrive in Italy, as you shal judge most convenient.

And we are so fully perswaded of the necessity of this enterprize and withall knowing your zeale for the common cause, and how absolutely necessary your presence will be to command our troops in this expedition; we do therefore hereby permit, and require you to take the command of our said troops upon you in person as soon as they have entered into Italy. And we leave it to your care and prudence to order and direct all other things relating to the said expedition as you shall judge most conducing to the promoting the intended service.

A. R.

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with Guiscard. He wrote of him to Marlborough in the highest terms: "His conduct has been full of zeal, very discreet and very moderate." Guiscard proposed that a number of battalions should be raised from the Huguenot refugees, and that these, reinforced by several brigades of British infantry and regiments of dragoons, should be landed by surprise somewhere between Blaye and the mouth of the Charente. Xantes was to be occupied and fortified, and the French Huguenot officers were from thence to rouse the Cevennes and reanimate the Camisards, carrying rebellion supported by invasion into these smouldering regions. Marlborough thought well of the venture and of the part it would play in his general strategy. Five Huguenot regiments were raised at the end of



THE DESCENT

1705, and nearly a dozen British battalions were gathered at Portsmouth and in the Isle of Wight. "I hope to be able," he wrote to Heinsius from London (February 12/23, 1706),

before I seal this letter to send you a project of the Comte de Guiscard, which has been communicated to M. de Buys; we keep it here as a great secret and do not doubt that you will do the same; but if we can make it practicable to make such an attempt, I should think this year is more proper than any. For by what we see of the French disposition for this year's service, there will be very few troops left in the body of the kingdom—I beg you will give me your opinion of this project so that I may know how to govern myself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vreede, p. 4.



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Heinsius, who had already had relations with Guiscard, favoured this use of amphibious power. It was of course entirely in harmony with Tory Party war-conceptions, and was bound to command a strong backing in Parliament once it became known. Marlborough always referred to it as the 'descent' (alas! he wrote it 'decent'), and we shall see it play an appreciable part in the operations of the next three years. Guiscard too was to make his own contribution to history when in 1710 he attempted to assassinate Harley, the Prime Minister, in the Council Chamber. The troops, together with their shipping and stores, were prepared and provided during the winter of 1705-6, and their use lay in Marlborough's hand when he reached The Hague.

The Italian scheme was destroyed by the earliest events of the campaign of 1706. The French forestalled the Allies in the field both on the Rhine and in Italy. In March Vendôme, unseasonably mobilized, inflicted at Calcinato a savage minor defeat upon Reventlau, who commanded the Imperial forces in Eugene's absence at Vienna. Eugene arrived, not indeed to stem the rout, but to reorganize and reanimate the beaten army when they reached the Trentino. Here was a loss in capture, and still more in desertion, of ten thousand men. In Germany Villars fell upon the Margrave, who with feeble forces was blockading Fort Louis, and on May 3 chased him over the Rhine. The blockade of Fort Louis was abandoned, and the blockaders were thankful, or even proud, to have made their escape. Hagenau and Duremberg were captured with their garrisons, and almost all those conquests which the triumphant Allies had made on the left bank after Blenheim were lost. Not only the line of the Moder, but also that of the Lauter, was devoured, and Landau, into which a garrison of four thousand men was thrown by the Margrave, alone remained. The siege and recapture of this key fortress seemed set for the next scene.

Marlborough's correspondence at this time with the King of Prussia and with Wartenberg, the Prussian Prime Minister,

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deserves study. The English Ambassador at Berlin, Lord Raby, was a gentleman of spirit, ardent for military repute, and inclined to carry diplomacy into dangerous channels. Marlborough's comment upon him as "impertinent and insignificant" is severe. However this may be, his intrigues, amorous and political, caused ill-feeling at the Prussian Court. He was accused roundly of being the lover of Countess Wartenberg, the Prime Minister's wife. This was a complication the advantages and disadvantages of which might well become the subject of dispute. In April the King demanded Raby's recall. However, in those days letters passed slowly.

A personal relationship had been established between Marlborough and Frederick I. The King, markedly emphasizing Marlborough's new dignity as a prince of the Empire, addressed him as "my cousin," and his letters breathed a spirit of comradeship and admiration. But he still delayed the moving of his troops. Those which should have been at Mainz were only at Wesel. Those which should have hastened to help the Margrave on the Upper Rhine were proceeding sluggishly towards Maestricht. The King complained that he had not been told of Marlborough's plans. Nor had he, for the project of the Duke's marching into Italy could not risk disclosure beyond the most limited circle. In fact, though Marlborough did not yet know it, a courier with an exposing dispatch from Victor Amadeus had already been captured by the enemy. The Prussian King wrote to Marlborough on April 20 a most severe and challenging letter couched in terms, probably sincere, of high personal regard. Considering the great number of troops Prussia was furnishing to the Allies, her King felt he should be party to all secrets. To this Marlborough replied personally with all ceremony. To Wartenberg, the Prime Minister, he was more blunt: if the King went on writing to him in this style, he would not find it necessary to give him any more information about military movements. But the moment that the Margrave was defeated upon the Upper Rhine and the Italian scheme was no longer possible Marlborough became expansive about his ruined plans. In

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a dozen letters he informed the Emperor, the King of Prussia, and all the German Electors what he had purposed and what he could no longer do. This was a cheap currency, but it was as much as he had to give. They were all now fully informed of the discarded plan.<sup>1</sup>

All this time the French armies were steadily concentrating, and further rude shocks impended on all European fronts. In these circumstances the States-General made Marlborough another simple offer. They would approve the sending of an extra ten thousand men to the aid of Prince Eugene, provided that he would himself command the Dutch armies on the Flanders front. Moreover, he should not be hampered in any way by Deputies or generals. If he, their Deputy Captain-General, would stay to guard the Dutch homeland, he should be master in the field, and he might send this further substantial aid to his comrade Eugene. Marlborough closed with this. Assuredly the Dutch kept their word. Slangenberg smouldered in sullen obscurity. Three new field Deputies, Sicco van Goslinga, Ferdinand van Collen, and Baron de Renswoude, were appointed with instructions to obey the Duke and with no prohibitions against fighting a battle, which however seemed most unlikely. Collen seems to have been a nonentity, and Renswoude was a friend of Marlborough's.<sup>2</sup> We shall have much to say about Goslinga as the story unfolds. He was no doubt picked for his office because of his personal courage and fiery, aggressive nature. Here was a man eager for battle. He would be no clog. But another series of difficulties arose. New trials, different in character, were henceforth to fall upon Marlborough's patience. Goslinga was a military-minded civilian, fascinated (without any professional knowledge) by the art of war, who would have liked to command the army himself. He combined the valour of ignorance with a mind fertile in plans of action. His military judgment was almost childish defective; his energy was overflowing. Day after day, as his memoirs recount, he waited upon the Duke in his tent, offering freely his best advice. When this was not taken his mood became

<sup>1</sup> See *Dispatches*, ii, 496-497 (to Wratislaw).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, 468.

## FORTUNE'S GIFT

not only critical but aspersive ; and from an early stage in their relations his writings accuse Marlborough of "prolonging the war for his own advantage," instead of ending it speedily and easily by adopting one or other of the numerous Goslinga plans. On the battlefields the pugnacious Deputy hustled into the hottest fighting, galloping to every quarter, helping to rally and lead disordered battalions, making happy suggestions to the generals in the heat of action, and sometimes even giving orders upon his vaguely defined but impressive authority. All this, however, will become apparent.

It was with melancholy thoughts that Marlborough began his most brilliant campaign. "I cross the sea," he wrote to Wratislaw, "with sufficiently sad reflections."<sup>1</sup> "The little concern of the King of Denmark and almost all the other princes give me so dismal thoughts that I almost despair of success."<sup>2</sup> These expressions can be multiplied. But this was his dangerous mood. Just as he had written before starting upon the Blenheim march that he saw no prospect of doing any good that year, so now he was in the deepest gloom. It was not the abysmal despair into which he was plunged in the two or three days before Oudenarde, but it was black as night. Yet he had his consolations, and his poise remained perfect. There is a letter of his which we like as much as any he wrote to his wife.

### *John to Sarah*

May 4[/15], 1706

\* I am very uneasy when Your letters do not come regularly, for without flatterie my greatest suport are the thoughts I have of your kindness ; hether too I really have not had tim to write to my Children, but when I do, be asur'd that I shal let them know my heart and soul, as to their living dutyfully, and kindly with You, and let mee beg for my sake of my dear Soull, that she will passe by litle faults and consider thay are very Young, and that thay cant do other then love you withal their hearts, for when thay consider how good a Mother You have been to them, thay must bee barbariens if thay did not make a kind return ; You will

<sup>1</sup> March 29 ; *Dispatches*, ii, 462.

<sup>2</sup> Marlborough to Godolphin, April 23/May 4 ; *Coxe*, ii, 330.

## MARLBOROUGH

see by my letters to Lord Treasurer that *in all likelywhode I shal make the whole Campagne in this country, and consequently not such a one as will please mee, but as I infinitely valli Your estime, for without that You cant love me, let mee say for my self, that there is some merit, in doing rather what is good for the publike, then in preferring ons private satisfaction and Intirest, for by my being here in a condition of doing nothing that shal make a noise, has made me able to send ten thousand men to Italie, and to leave Nyntien thousand men on the Rbin til the Mareschal de Marsin shal bring back his detachment to this country;* the ffrench are very possitive that thay must succed at Barcelone but I trust in God our ffeet will releive it, and then we may end this Campagne so as that the ffrench may have nothing to brag off, for I fflatter my self that the ten thousand men we are sending to Pr. Eugene will put him in a condition of acting offensively; for Garmany I expect nothing but ill news, and for this country I do not doubt but You will be so kind as to beleive if I have an oportunity I will do my best; the decent [descent] is what I have also a great opinion off.

pray lett mr Travers know that I shall be glad to hear sometimes from him how the Building goes on at Woodstock; for the Gardening and Plantations I am at ease, being very sure that mr Wise will bee dilligent.<sup>1</sup>

This is the most splendid period in Marlborough's career. Every personal need urged that he should win a battle for himself. At home the wolves, though temporarily baffled, were always growling. Already Sarah was losing her influence with the Queen: already her contacts were becoming a hindrance, not a help. His dream of another epic march across Europe and an Italian "Hochstädt" won side by side with the man he loved had faded. But there still remained the duty of a soldier and the dominating responsibility of the working Head of the Alliance. Not without pangs, but certainly without the slightest hesitation, Marlborough divested himself of troops which would have secured him a large superiority in the Low Countries and the chance of some deed "that shall make a noise." What an example to admirals and generals of the Great War through which we

<sup>1</sup> The part in italics is quoted in Coxe, ii, 335-336; the rest is from the Blenheim MSS.

## FORTUNE'S GIFT

have passed, to fight for the common cause and not to be 'local commanders,' grasping at all the ships or troops they could reach or extort, so as to make themselves secure in their own sphere, even if all else went to rack and disaster ! We know of no similar instance in military history where a general-in-chief, thus pressed, has deliberately confined himself to a secondary rôle while furnishing colleagues, who were also rivals, with the means of action. There is nothing in the career of Napoleon which stands upon the level of the comradeship of Marlborough and Eugene. Napoleon's relations to Davout during and after Jena are the exact contrary. Only with Lee and Jackson have we a similar self-effacement among warriors of genius ; and even then more with Lee than Jackson. So Marlborough wrote, and so he decided. He strove to reconcile himself to "a whole campaign" with indecisive forces in the fortress zone of Brabant at a time when personal success seemed most necessary to his public existence.

A small incident at this moment throws a pleasant light upon John and Sarah. An unfortunate divine, one Stephens, who had already published in the interests of his party a memorial on *The Church in Danger*, illustrated his theme by disparaging comments upon Marlborough's military performances, and found himself in consequence of the Lords' Resolution condemned not only to a fine but to the pillory. Horror-struck at his approaching ordeal, he implored Sarah's mercy and protection. These were not denied. Availing herself of her partially restored friendship with the Queen, she begged that he should be let off the physical punishment, which he piteously protested would break the hearts of his wife and children. The reluctance with which Anne agreed to suspend this is a measure of her mood at this time. She wrote :

I have upon my dear Mrs Freeman's pressing letter about Mr Stephens ordered Mr Secretary Harley to put a stop to his standing in the pillory till farther orders, which is in effect the same thing as if he were pardoned. Nothing but your desire

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could have inclined me to it, for in my poor opinion it is not right. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough shared Sarah's compassion.

May 9/20

I agree entirely with you that Stephens ought not to be forgiven before sentence, but after he is in the Queen's power, if her Majesty has no objection to it, I should be glad he were forgiven ; but I submit it to her Majesty's pleasure, and the opinion of my friends. I do not know who is the author of the review [a favourable pamphlet by another hand] ; but I do not love to see my name in print, for I am persuaded that an honest man must be justified by his own actions, and not by the pen of a writer, though he should be a zealous friend.<sup>2</sup>

And a little later :

I am very glad you have prevailed with the Queen for pardoning Stephens. I should have been very uneasy if the law had not found him guilty, but much more uneasy if he had suffered the punishment on my account.

The Captain-General quitted the endless discussions at The Hague and set out in his coach for Headquarters on May 9. Here he found little to comfort him.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

May 4/15

When I left The Hague on Sunday last I was assured that I should find the army in a condition to march. But as yet neither the artillery horses nor the bread-wagons are come, so that we shall be obliged to stay for the English, which will join us on Wednesday, and then we shall advance towards Louvain. *God knows I go with a heavy heart ; for I have no prospect of doing anything considerable, unless the French would do what I am very confident they will not ; unless the Marshal de Marsin should return, as it is reported, with thirty battalions and forty squadrons ; for that would give to them such a superiority as might tempt them to march out of their lines, which if they do, I will most certainly attack them, not doubting, with the blessing of God, to beat them,*

<sup>1</sup> *The Private Correspondence of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*, i, 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i, 22.

## FORTUNE'S GIFT

though the foreign troops I have seen are not so good as they were last year ; but I hope the English are better.<sup>1</sup>

Louis XIV had brooded deeply upon the danger and ignominy which his finest army had sustained under Villeroy in the late campaign. To stand upon the defensive in the Low Countries seemed to promise only the renewal of those affronts. The genius of the French soldier could not, the King felt, flourish without not merely offering, but seeking battle. Long fortified lines were plainly no barrier to the kind of manœuvres of which Marlborough was capable. Moreover, the old lines were gone. Forty miles of them had been diligently levelled by him before the armies went into winter quarters. What, then, was to prevent the "mortified adventurer," backed by his bloodthirsty English Parliament, from again packing ten days' food upon his wagons, marching into the midst of the fortress zone, and confronting the French commanders with the kind of hideous situation from which, as they now knew, only the Dutch Deputies had saved them last August? To avoid this, Villeroy must be free to show the same eagerness for a decisive trial of strength as his opponent. The initiative must be seized and held from the beginning of the campaign. The will-power of the aggressive antagonist must be bent by a sincere readiness to fight, and if possible broken by a great battle. Chamillart encouraged these (in themselves) sound military conceptions of the Great King by counsels which had less sound foundations. Marlborough was an adventurer ; his knowledge of war was mediocre ; Blenheim was a fluke. The surrender of twenty-seven battalions of the French flower in Hochstädt was not a fact from which to draw general conclusions. It was easily explained by the blunders of Tallard and the misconduct of Clérambault. But for these this monstrous imposition of a unique defeat and of irresistible hostile fighting power would never have depressed the morale of the royal armies. France must now re-establish true values, and for this there was no way except battle. And why shrink from it? The successes

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, ii, 335.



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of Calcinato in Italy and of Hagenau on the Rhine justified a confident temper. Their news about Marlborough was, moreover, encouraging. "On trouve en Hollande," wrote Torcy to Tallard on May 11, "M. de Marlborough moins vif sur la guerre qu'il était les années précédentes."<sup>1</sup> Thus King Louis and his overburdened Minister of War and Finance stirred one another.

They then proceeded to stir Villeroy. They wrote him successive letters in the spirit that he should not hesitate to fight, that he should not shirk a pitched battle. Let all be arranged to give a good superiority, and then make some offensive movement to which Marlborough must submit or take the consequences. "The brusque and proud spirit of Villeroy," says Saint-Simon,

was wounded by these reiterated admonitions. He had the feeling that the King doubted his courage since he judged it necessary to spur him so hard. He resolved to put all at stake to satisfy him, and to prove that he did not deserve such harsh suspicions.<sup>2</sup>

The mental processes of a general should lead him first to put himself faithfully in the position of his enemy, and to credit that enemy with the readiness to do what he himself would most dread. In the next stage idiosyncrasies of the hostile commander, the temper and quality of his troops, and the political background come into play. But these are secondary. The safe course is to assume that the enemy will do his worst—*i.e.*, what is most unwelcome. With that provided against, lesser evils can be resisted. Marlborough, surveying the campaign of 1706 as if he were King Louis's adviser, was convinced that the true French effort should be made in Italy and in Spain. If more force was available it should be used against the Margrave on the Upper Rhine. A period of sieges in the fortress zone of the Low Countries might lead to a few French strongholds being lost, but would gain much precious time for action elsewhere. Accordingly, in various letters Marlborough had formally advised the

<sup>1</sup> French Foreign Office Archives, vol. 221, f. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Saint-Simon, iv, 422.

## FORTUNE'S GIFT

Dutch Government that no French offensive in the Low Countries need be expected.<sup>1</sup> Also to Heinsius :

In my opinion there is nothing more certain than that the French have taken their measures to be this campaign on the defensive in Flanders and Germany, in order to be the better able to act offensively in Italy and Spain.<sup>2</sup>

And again :

26 March, 1706

I am very much of your opinion that the placing of the King of Frances Housold [*sic*] so that they may be sent either to Germany or Flanders is a plain instance that they intend to take their motions from what we shall do, which confirms me in my opinion of their being resolved to act in both places defensively.<sup>3</sup>

He was wrong only because the French were wrong. He judged their hand as he would have played it himself. Hence the despondency with which he resigned himself to a difficult, wearisome, and limited manœuvring among the fortresses. His costly Intelligence service could give him no clue to the personal reactions which his operations of 1705 had produced upon Louis XIV, nor to the pressures which the King was putting upon his Marshal. Up till May 18 we see Marlborough sombrely resigned to the path of duty, having cleansed his heart of personal ambition, and acting solely in the common cause.

King Louis's dispositions for the northern front comprised an army of forty thousand under Villars to operate against the Margrave on the Upper Rhine, and an army under Villeroy of sixty thousand to confront Marlborough in Brabant. Marshal Marsin, with 25 battalions and 30 squadrons, lay so as to operate in either theatre, and likewise the famous Maison du Roi (the "Housold") was so posted as to be capable of intervening either way, but with a strong bias towards Brabant. The King's plan was that both these

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Geldermalsen ; *Dispatches*, ii, 516.

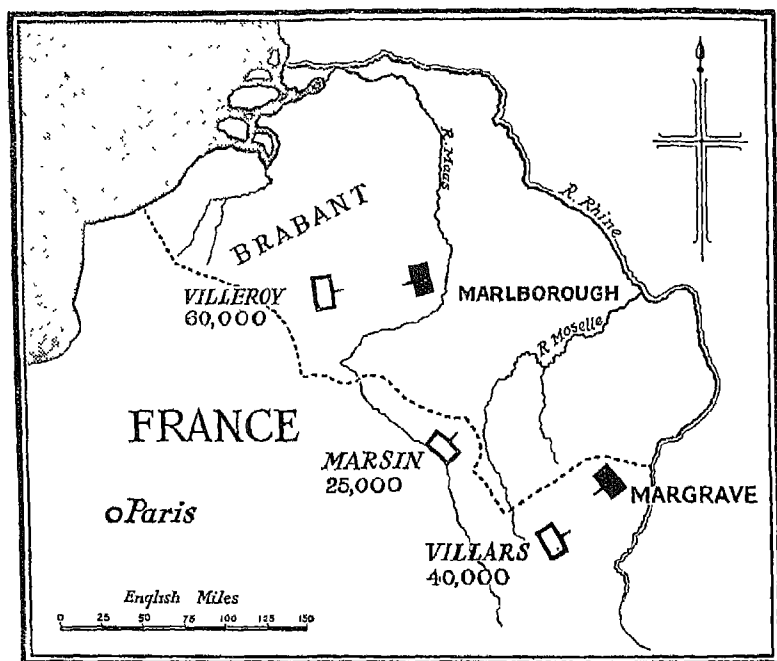
<sup>2</sup> February 22, 1706, Vicede, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

## MARLBOROUGH

important forces should join Villeroy, and thereafter seek Marlborough, and put him to the test.

The reader will remember the minor fortress of Léau, which surrendered to the Allies after the Lines of Brabant were forced in July 1703.<sup>1</sup> Louis XIV held, and was advised, that the siege of this place would either inflict painful humiliation



THE NORTHERN FRONT (MAY 1706)

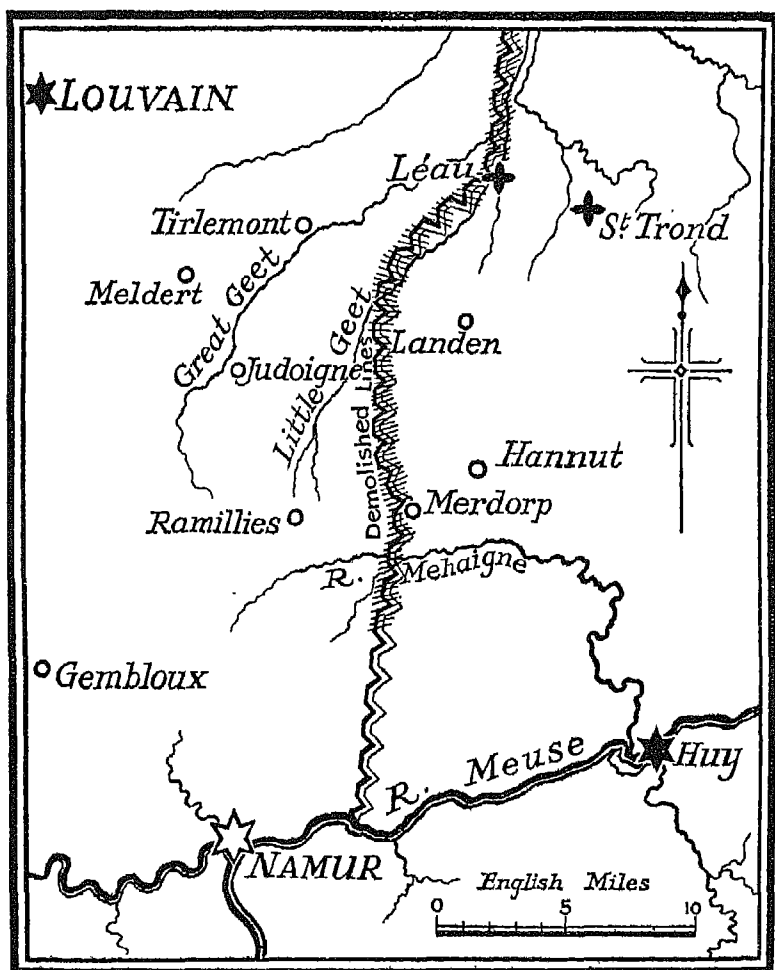
upon Marlborough or force him to a battle at odds and disadvantage.<sup>2</sup> Villeroy's instructions were therefore definite. Moreover, that Marshal had newly lighted upon one of Marlborough's many intrigues. A prominent citizen of Namur was believed to be in treacherous correspondence with the Captain-General for the purpose of delivering that important fortified city into the hands of the Allies. This was no more than the truth. Villeroy's counterstroke to such designs was well expressed in an aggressive siege of Léau,

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, pp. 568, 596, 604. See map at p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Pelet, vi, 40.

## FORTUNE'S GIFT

and he became most anxious to forestall his opponent. He knew that none of the Prussians had passed the Rhine. He learned that the Danes would be absent from any immediate



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concentration Marlborough might make. It therefore seemed necessary to reckon only with the Dutch and the English, and over these the Marshal conceived he had an ample superiority.

## MARLBOROUGH

On May 18 the Intelligence service reported heavy French assemblings on the left bank of the Dyle between Wavre and Louvain. On the 19th decisive news arrived. The French army had crossed the Dyle and advanced to within four miles of Tirlemont. This could only mean that they courted battle. The situation was instantaneously transformed. Doubt and despondency vanished; all became simple and dire. All the allied contingents were ordered forthwith to concentrate. Marlborough's first thought was for the Danes. He sent an urgent message to their general, the Duke of Württemberg :

Having this moment learned that the enemy have passed the Dyle and almost reached Tirlemont, I send you this express to request your Highness to bring forward by a double march your cavalry, together or in separate units as they lie upon the road, so as to join us at the earliest moment, letting your infantry follow with all the speed possible without exhaustion. In case your Highness is not with the leading corps, the officer commanding that corps is hereby instructed to march without waiting further orders, and to forward this letter forthwith to your Highness and all commanders in rear so that they also can conform.<sup>1</sup>

The whole region was familiar to both sides. It had long been regarded as a possible ground of great battles. It was one of the most thoroughly comprehended terrains in Europe. We remember how Marlborough had wished to force the Lines hard by this point in the autumn of 1703, and how the Dutch generals had warned him against the dangers of the Ramillies position, which lay three miles behind them and in which there was "a narrow aperture of but 1200 paces."<sup>2</sup> We must remember also that the French engineers who traced the Lines of Brabant had discarded the Ramillies position for the reason that it was concave and thus had lengthy sideways communications. For this reason they had decided to construct the Lines somewhat in advance of it. Marlborough, of course, knew the ground perfectly. His autumn headquarters, while he was levelling the Lines, had been for more than a month at Meldert, five miles from Tirlemont. He

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was accustomed to keep himself fit and hard by riding every day. We have seen how a week before Blenheim he and Eugene reconnoitred all the neighbourhood south of the Danube where a battle might be fought.<sup>1</sup> We cannot doubt that he had examined this part of Flanders and measured its possibilities in his mind as in a newly read and deeply pondered book.

Indeed, his topographical memories went back to the wars of King William. The whole area had been thoroughly mapped by English and French engineers. Maps of those days reached a high level of information and accuracy, and we must imagine besides that Marlborough could visualize the whole of these areas and their military potentialities in exceptional clarity and detail. Moreover, though in no way he expected the French advance, he would mark the Ramillies position as one which the French might be inclined to occupy if he could not get there first, and where a battle might very well be fought. This knowledge, his eye and memory for country, together with his belief in his own troops and in his own capacity, explain the amazing wave of confidence which swept over him as soon as he divined the purpose of the French advance, and the spontaneity of his subsequent action on the battlefield. During the 19th, 20th, and 21st of May he wrote seven letters to the various high personages upon whom his system depended, proclaiming his belief that a battle was imminent, and that a great victory would be won.

To Harley :

The enemy having drained all their garrisons, and depending on their superiority, passed the Dyle yesterday and came and posted themselves at Tirlemont, with the Geet before them, whereupon I have sent orders to the Danish troops, who are coming from their garrisons, to hasten their march. I hope they may be with us on Saturday, and then I design to advance towards the enemy, to oblige them to retire, or with the blessing of God to bring them to a battle.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 423.

## CHAPTER VI

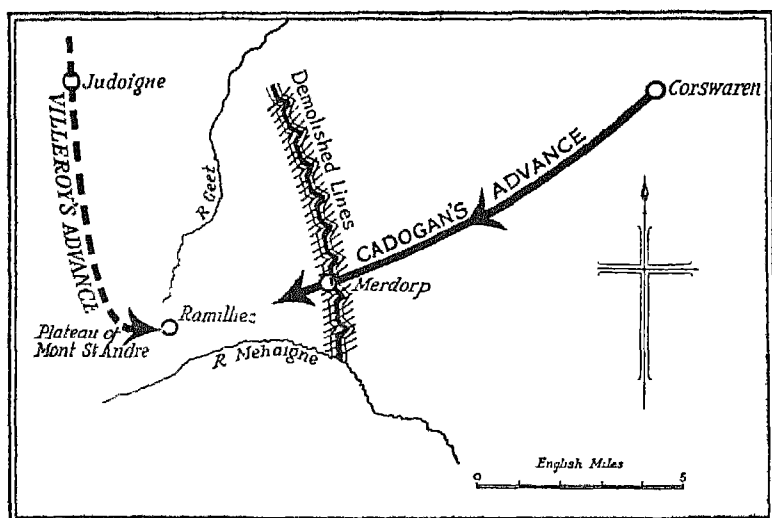
### THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

May 23, 1706 THE Confederate army was concentrated around Corswaren by the evening of the 22nd. The English had joined the Dutch the day before, and the Danes were only a league behind. Marlborough mustered 74 battalions and 123 squadrons, with exceptionally strong artillery and pontoon trains (100 guns, 20 "hawbitzers," 42 pontoons). The suddenness with which the campaign had opened found the Dutch with four hundred officers absent; but otherwise the army was in excellent condition, and comprised about sixty-two thousand men. Marlborough's intention was to march through the gap of firm ground between the head-streams of the Geet and those of the Mehaigne in order to occupy the plateau of Mont Saint-André, which formed a part of the Ramillies position. He purposed thereafter to seek Villeroy in the neighbourhood of Judoigne and bring him to battle or drive him across the Dyle.

An hour after midnight he sent Cadogan and the quartermasters, with an escort of six hundred horse, to scout ahead of the army and if unopposed to mark out the new camp. The prescribed march was about twelve miles. The whole army, in four columns, started at three A.M. in dense fog and darkness. The organization by which these large masses found their way across country deserves respect; but of course their progress was very slow. Three hours after daylight, at about eight o'clock, Cadogan, far ahead of them, reached the high ground beyond the hamlet of Merdorp, and here in thick mist his escort struck into advance parties of French hussars. There were shots and scamperings. Cadogan halted. The mist lifting a little, he was able to see moving objects on the farther side of the valley; this was the Mont Saint-André plateau, upon which it seemed

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

the enemy also had designs. He sent word at once to Marlborough. The Duke had already started, and, passing through his marching troops, joined his trusted and treasured lieutenant at ten o'clock. Almost at the same moment the mist curtains rose, and the whole western horizon was seen to be alive with men whose armour and weapons flashed back the bright sunshine from ten thousand sparkling points.



CONTACT

Marlborough could not know at this moment whether the enemy would fight or retreat. He resolved forthwith to attack them in either event. If he was in presence only of a rearguard, he would fall upon them with all his cavalry; if, on the other hand, they were prepared to defend the Ramillies position, a general battle would at once be fought. Orders were sent back to all the columns, and especially to the cavalry, to press their march; for the enemy awaited them. At about eleven the allied army were traversing the Lines which Marlborough had demolished in the autumn, and here they subdivided into eight columns preparatory to



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forming the line of battle. The Danish horse was already close to the Dutch cavalry on the left wing.<sup>1</sup>

We must now recur to M. de la Colonie, the "Old Campaigner," who at the head of his Franco-Bavarian brigade had marched with the French army from Judoigne in the morning :

So vast was the plain at Ramillies that we were able to march our army on as broad a front as we desired, and the result was a magnificent spectacle. The army began its march at six o'clock in the morning, formed into two large columns, the front of each consisting of a battalion ; the artillery formed a third, which marched between the two infantry columns. The cavalry squadrons in battle formation occupied an equal extent of ground, and, there being nothing to impede the view, the whole force was seen in such a fine array that it would be impossible to view a grander sight. The army had but just entered on the campaign ; weather and fatigue had hardly yet had time to dim its brilliancy, and it was inspired with a courage born of confidence. The late Marquis de Goudrin, with whom I had the honour to ride during the march, remarked to me that France had surpassed herself in the quality of these troops ; he believed that the enemy had no chance whatever of breaking them in the coming conflict ; if defeated now, we could never again hope to withstand them.<sup>2</sup>

About eleven o'clock the Duke began his personal reconnaissance. There rode with him only Overkirk, Dopff, Cadogan, a couple of ex-Spanish officers (Belgians) who knew every inch of the ground well, and the new Deputy, Sicco van Goslinga, whom it was so important to captivate.

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga records his own opinion that if at this time in the morning Villeroy had himself attacked with his whole army he would have taken the Allies at a great disadvantage, because their infantry were lagging far behind and only part of their cavalry had come up. We quote this nonsense merely to measure its author as a military critic. Obviously, if the French army had advanced Marlborough would have fallen back with his cavalry, and formed his line of battle somewhere about the old levelled Lines of Brabant. By this time the Danes would have come up, and an encounter-battle on equal terms, save that the French would be further exhausted by their additional march, would have followed. Since we see so many writers gravely parading Goslinga's military opinions it is necessary to expose them, though otherwise they are of no significance.

Goslinga's diary (*Mémoires relatifs à la guerre de succession de 1706-9 et 1711 de Sicco van Goslinga* (Leeuwarden, 1857), p. 19) is almost the whole substance of Klopp's account of the battle of Ramillies.

<sup>2</sup> *The Chronicles of an Old Campaigner*, p. 305.



SICCO VAN GOSLINGA

From an engraving after a painting by Bernard Accama



## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

We are indebted to Sicco for a naïve account. As they stood on the slopes opposite Ramillies the ex-Spanish officers said boldly and positively to the Duke "that the enemy's left could not be attacked with any prospect of success : for the hedges, ditches and marshes were a complete barrier *to both sides* : that therefore the whole of our cavalry should be massed on our left, even if they had to be three or four lines deep: and that all thereabouts was fair open plain." The Duke listened impassively ; but, adds Goslinga, " he left the order of battle as it was with an equality of cavalry on each wing." <sup>1</sup>

The new field Deputy saw the mistake at once, and, writing years afterwards, pointed it out to his children. In spite of the advice which he had received that the cavalry could only act upon his left, Marlborough supinely let them remain equally divided according to the conventional order of battle. Luckily, notes Goslinga, " the enemy made the same mistake as the Duke did, and did not remedy it as he did during the combat." These inane comments should strip Goslinga of any military credential except that of being a stout-hearted Dutchman. We can see Marlborough, bland, inscrutable, on his horse at the head of this small group, making the great mistake of dividing his cavalry more or less equally upon each wing, so that Villeroy fell into the same error and kept no fewer than fifty squadrons massed upon this impracticable flank. No doubt Marlborough did not at this moment forget that the French occupied the well-known crescent position of which he commanded the chord. However, he said nothing. He deceived Goslinga. The poor man missed the whole point. He deceived Villeroy, which was, of course, more important.

Meanwhile the eight columns had arrived on the rolling upland of Jandrinol and were deploying into line of battle, eating their dinners as they arrived at their preparatory stations. A little after one all along the line the French artillery began to fire. The Allies replied a few minutes later with far heavier metal. Whereas at Blenheim the French had

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 19.

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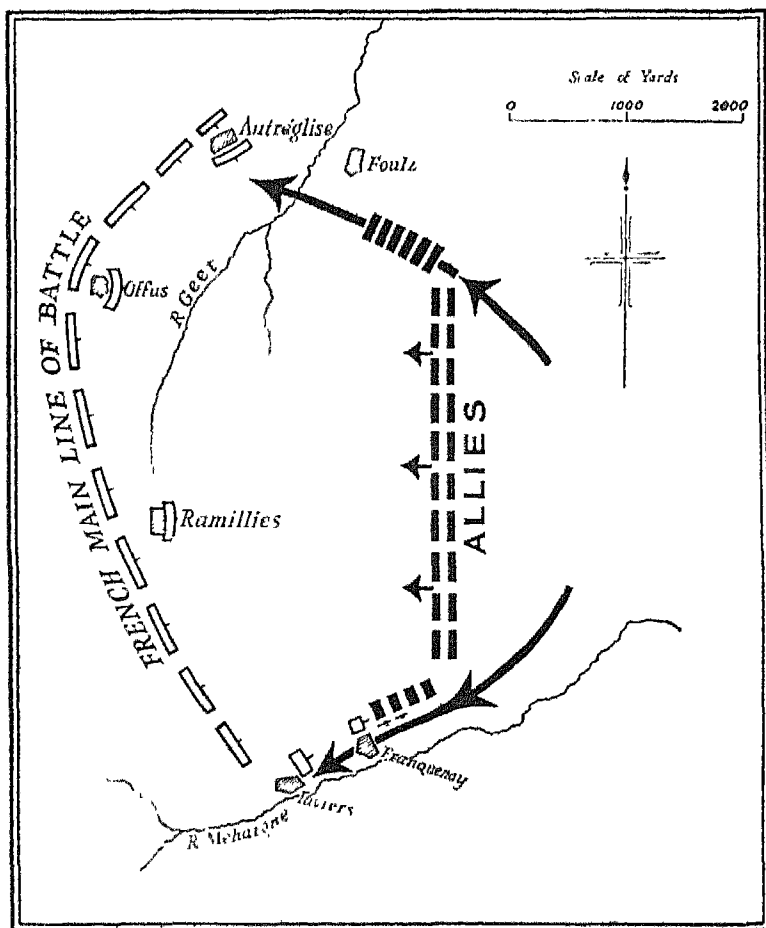
used a 50 per cent. superior artillery, the case was almost reversed at Ramillies, for Marlborough had not only more guns, but nearly thirty 24-pounders. Although artillery in those days was not a decisive weapon, the fact should be noted. The roar of the cannonade resounded, and the smoke clouds drifted across the broad undulations of a battlefield unchanged and unobstructed to this day.

Contact between armies began about half-past two. The Allies advanced in magnificent array on a four-mile front; but at both ends of the main line, and nearly half an hour ahead of it, two separate attacks of pregnant consequence projected like horns. Towards the extreme French right, now lodged in the villages of Franquenay and Taviers, a column of Dutch infantry rapidly advanced. Next to them, but nearly a mile behind, all the cavalry of the left wing, Dutch and Danish, approached the gap between Taviers and Ramillies, where eighty-two French squadrons, including the long-renowned *Maison du Roi*, stood to receive them. The main allied infantry attack, comprising forty thousand men ranged in two heavy lines, advanced slowly towards the enemy's centre between Ramillies and Autréglise. The massive onset of the whole army, drawing momentarily nearer with intent to kill and destroy, made its impression upon Marshal Villeroy and his troops, as it had upon Tallard and Marsin at Blenheim. The French command observed the scene from the high ground to the north of Offus, and one fact riveted their thought. This was the northern horn of Marlborough's line of battle led by Orkney. Against their left, towards the village of Autréglise, considerably ahead of the Allies' general line, there steadily developed a Red Thing. The two scarlet columns on this flank had now formed into lines, and were rapidly descending the slopes about Foulz. Already their skirmishers were paddling and plodding in the marshy bottom, using bridging equipment, finding tracks, and wending their way across. Intermingled with this infantry were considerable bodies of red-coated cavalry, also plashing forward mounted or leading their horses towards Autréglise.

When in contact with immeasurable events it is always

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

dangerous to have fixed opinions. Villeroy's opinions had been fixed for him by the Great King. "It would be very important," Louis XIV had written a fortnight earlier, "to



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have particular attention to that part of the line which will endure the first shock of the English troops."<sup>1</sup> With this the Marshal was in full agreement. He had therefore no doubt what to do. He saw with satisfaction that this

<sup>1</sup> Louis XIV to Villeroy, May 6, 1706; Pelet, vi, 19.

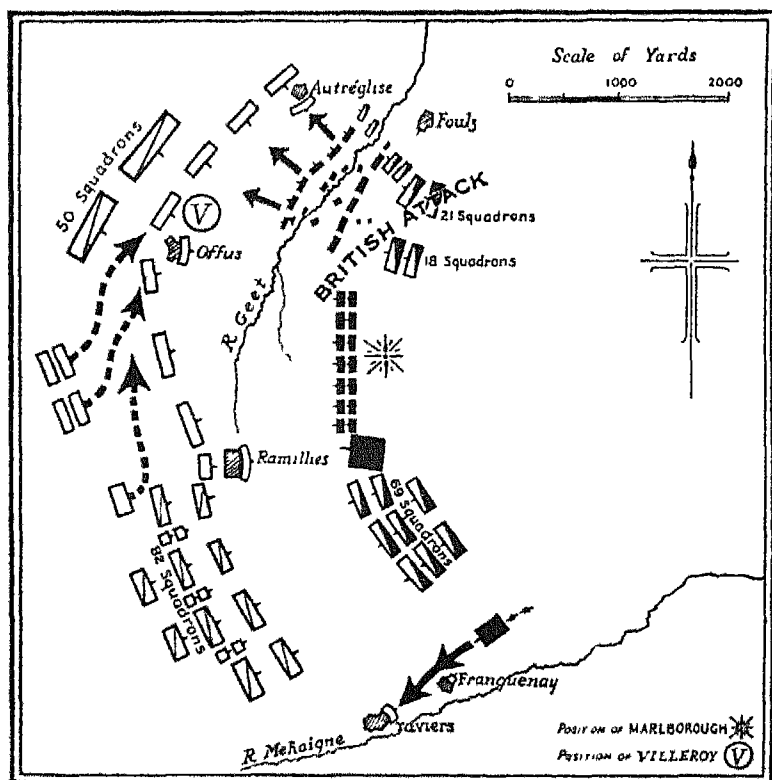
## MARLBOROUGH

dreaded attack, which also threatened his line of retreat upon Louvain, was about to fall upon that part of the French army which was most strongly protected by the accidents of the ground. A fine opportunity offered itself. Forthwith the sector between Autréglise and Ramillies was heavily reinforced by troops brought up from the rear or transferred from the French right and right centre. The choice battalions of the French Guards and the Swiss were urgently brought into the line to meet, under the most favourable conditions, the impending collision with the redoubtable islanders. The whole of the cavalry of the French left wing, about fifty squadrons, was held in close readiness for the decisive moment. That moment would come when this red attack was half across the sloppy meadows of the valley, and enough British had breasted the upward slope to make the prize worth taking. That moment could not be long delayed. Evidently the marsh was not so grievous an obstacle as the French engineers had deemed it. Not only had considerable bodies of British infantry made their way across it and formed on the farther side, but several squadrons of the same kind of horsemen could be observed in order at the foot of the slope. A definite line of battle, much inferior to the troops who awaited them, was already moving upward towards Offus and Autréglise. The Marshal judged his presence necessary at this dominating point. By his side rode the Elector, Max Emmanuel, who, summoned at the last moment from his pious exercises of Pentecost, had just arrived at a gallop from Brussels. For all that they counted in the main decision, we may here leave the French High Command. This we must regard as Act I of the battle of Ramillies.

But three or four miles away, at the other end of the line, there had been an overture. It was essential to the French occupation of the Ramillies position that the village of Tavers, to which Franquenay formed an outwork, on the extreme right, should be strongly held. A mile and a half of perfect cavalry country separated Tavers from Ramillies. Here must be the scene of the great cavalry encounter. The cannon of those

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

days could not effectively sweep so wide a space with cross-fire, but the position of both these strong villages would make the intervening ground most adverse to his assailants. Thus Villeroy had occupied Franquenay and Taviers with five



THE BRITISH ATTACK

battalions, but not apparently with artillery. Against Taviers a little after 2.30 P.M. there marched four battalions of the Dutch guard, under General Wertmuller. Behind them to their right, opposite the cavalry gap, the solid masses of Dutch and Danish cavalry could be plainly seen.

Almost everything about the battle of Ramillies is clear, but none of the accounts explain how these four battalions managed so swiftly to storm the villages of Franquenay and



## MARLBOROUGH

Taviers, and expel the larger number of French troops from their houses and enclosures. An ancient map<sup>1</sup> throws light on this. This map was drawn for General Overkirk, probably under his personal directions, a year after the victory. It throws a sharp gleam of light upon this operation. The two cannon<sup>2</sup> were apparently brought forward in the very van of the Dutch attack. So unusual was the employment of artillery in those days in the front line, and so remarkable was the effect of these pieces, that a special reference in the explanatory table is devoted to them—a departure from the whole proportion of the map. Evidently these two cannon were attached to the Dutch Guards by orders of the supreme command, probably by Overkirk himself. Brought into action at close range, they smashed the houses and garden walls, and opened the way for the violent assault of these fine Dutch troops. By a quarter-past three, just about the time when the English attack on the other end of the line was preoccupying the French headquarters, the Allies gained both these extremely important villages, which should have guarded the French right flank, and, together with the Ramillies batteries, have swept and protected to a very large extent the gap of open plain in which the mass of the French cavalry were ranged.

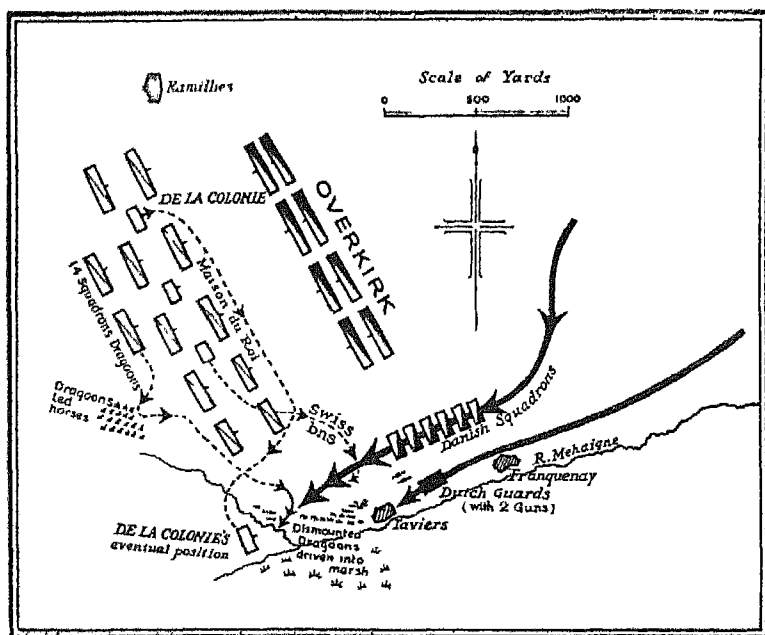
The serious nature of this loss was instantly realized by the French command in this quarter. Two battalions of Swiss and fourteen squadrons of dragoons were ordered to retake Taviers. La Colonie's Bavarian brigade, which had reached the battlefield south of Ramillies at about half-past two, was ordered to support them. The dragoons withdrew from the array of French cavalry in the plain, dismounted, and parked their horses about midway between Taviers and a wooded eminence called the Tomb of Ottomond. From this point they advanced on foot upon Taviers. The counter-attack upon Taviers, because of the urgent need to recover the place, was delivered before La Colonie's brigade could reach the scene. It was repulsed by the Dutch, now firmly ensconced. But worse was to follow; for while the

<sup>1</sup> Facing p. 128. This map should also be consulted for the general aspect of the battle.

<sup>2</sup> Marked 'M' in the map.

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

Swiss and the dismounted dragoons were falling back, a whirlwind of hostile cavalry broke upon them, and destroyed or routed them utterly. These were the Danes, who, supporting the success of the Dutch battalions, slipped in between Tavieres and the French right, and, already reaching forward round the French right, exacted this cruel forfeit. The dismounted



THE COMBAT BY TAVIERES

dragoons never saw their led-horses again. Thus, before the main cavalry shock occurred the French cavalry in the plain had been reduced from eighty-two to sixty-eight squadrons, while losing all security for their right.

At this point we must return to the Old Campaigner. The orders he had received "to reinforce the village of Tavieres" drew his Bavarian brigade across the front of the Maison du Roi under long-range cannon fire to which he replied, ordering

flourishes upon our hautboys, to entertain us the while; but the booming of the guns that went on all round so startled our

## MARLBOROUGH

musicians that they disappeared like a flash before anyone noticed it, and transported the melodious sounds of their instruments to some quarter where the harmonies were not quite so discordant. However, we set out, and passed along the right of our line to reach the marsh without knowing if any other troops had preceded us, or if others were to follow us.

La Colonie records two impressions—first, “that the enemy were moving troops from their right to their left: but it was impossible to define their intentions.” His second impression is not less significant:

I noticed, when passing the Maison du Roi, that there were large intervals between the squadrons, and that their formation was disproportionately extended. This made me think that the principal attack was not to be made here; that there was some other and more dangerous point that had had to be provided for; and that reliance had been placed upon the Maison du Roi, all picked men, at this point. When these gentlemen saw us pass the head of their squadrons, they evidently thought that we were coming to support their right on the marsh, and by the graceful applause with which they greeted my grenadiers, this seemed to give them some pleasure; they recalled the action of Schellenberg, and made known to us how much they counted on our valour in the coming engagement; but they soon found that they could hardly reckon upon us, as we continued our march and crossed the swamp [towards Taviers].

Arrived near this point, the Old Campaigner became sharply conscious that a mishap had occurred. Not only had the troops originally sent to occupy Taviers been driven out of the village, but the Swiss and dragoons who had been thrown in to recapture it

came tumbling down upon my battalions in full flight, just at the time when I was re-forming my men after their crossing; they brought such alarm and confusion in their train that my own fellows turned about and fled along with them. It appeared that they had attacked the village without waiting for us, and had been repulsed with much loss by the fourteen [actually four] battalions the enemy had there, which were well posted, and outnumbered them by two to one. The Swiss perished almost to a man, and it is not surprising that a small body of troops attacking others more

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

than double their strength in an advantageous position should have been vigorously repulsed and driven back in disorder. M. d'Aubigni was killed, and his lieutenant-colonel and many others wounded. The runaways threw themselves amongst my men, and carried them off with them, and I was never more surprised in my life to find myself left standing alone with a few officers and the colours. I was immediately filled with rage and grief; I cried out in German and French like one possessed; I shouted every epithet I could think of to my grenadiers; I seized the colonel's colour, planted it by me, and by the loudness of my cries I at last attracted the attention of some few of them. The officers who had stood by me rushed after the fugitives, also shouting and pointing out the colonel's colour, which I still kept in my hands, and at last they checked the stampede. I gradually rallied my French grenadiers and several companies of the Cologne regiment, making in all four small battalions, very much shaken with the manœuvres they had just gone through.<sup>1</sup>

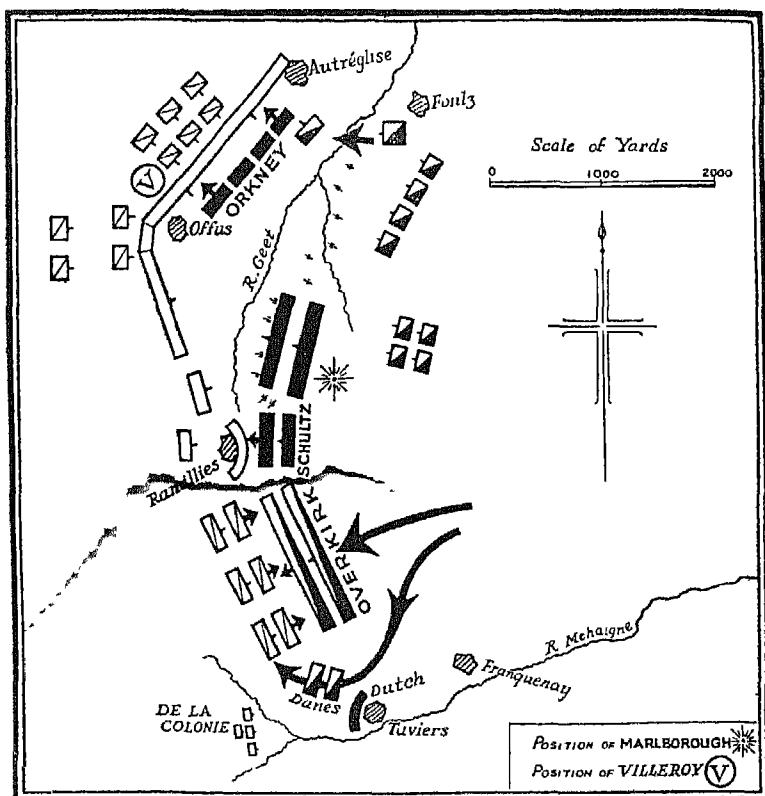
With this small force behind the marshes the colonel maintained himself throughout the afternoon, and from this point had a fine view of the tremendous cavalry battle which was now about to begin.

The second act of the drama opened. Overkirk, with the Dutch cavalry and twenty-one Danish squadrons well forward on his left, advanced against the Maison du Roi and the mass of the French forces between Tavers and Ramillies. At the same time the infantry of Marlborough's centre began to come into close contact with the Ramillies defences. The main fronts of both armies were now in action. Marlborough with his staff and retinue must at this time have been on the high ground before Offus and Ramillies. Indeed, he was practically opposite to Villeroy and the Elector, though somewhat farther south. But whereas Villeroy's gaze, fascinated by the advance of the English, was turned to the northern flank, Marlborough was watching the cavalry struggle beginning in the contrary quarter. It is probable that he had no certain knowledge of what had happened in Tavers; but he could see plainly the surge and shock of Overkirk's resolute advance, and that this

<sup>1</sup> *The Chronicles of an Old Campaigner*, p. 309.

## MARLBOROUGH

was not impeded by any cross-fire. He saw the forty-eight Dutch squadrons crash into the Maison du Roi. Measuring and timing the forces now launched, he was entitled to the same assurance of success as he had felt before the final attack at Blenheim.

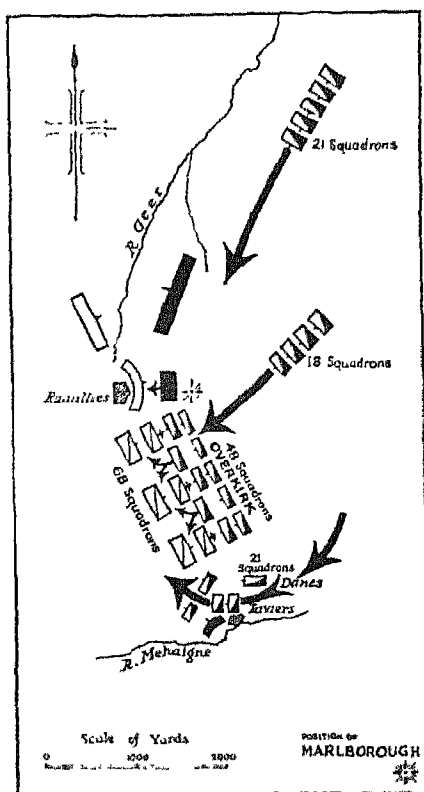


THE GENERAL ENGAGEMENT

Forthwith he began the simple yet superb manœuvre to which the preliminaries had led—namely, the transference of all his cavalry to the left wing. He sent peremptory orders to Orkney to break off the attack on Offus and Autréglise and retire, and to withdraw the British to the high ground behind Foulz. Casting aside his veil of secrecy and deception, he exclaimed, "I have five horses to two." Actually

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

he now had the power to bring first four to three, and finally five to three;<sup>1</sup> but it was enough. Leaving Cadogan to enforce Orkney's withdrawal and to rearrange the right, he ordered eighteen squadrons from the cavalry of that wing to trot across the rear of his infantry attack on Ramillies to the support of Overkirk's cavalry attack. He galloped on ahead of them with his personal staff. He arrived at a crisis. The Dutch, knee to knee in a solid mass, had charged the Maison du Roi. These splendid warriors, the pride of the French nobility, advanced in countercharge to meet their foes. Where their squadrons engaged front to front they conquered, but the Dutch, penetrating the intervals between the French squadrons, assailed them in flank and even in rear. In this mêlée the French cannon could not meddle; and the horsemen were free to fight it out alone.



THE CAVALRY BATTLE

Nevertheless, such was the vigour of the French cavalry that they drove in the Dutch right, and were about to fall upon the left flank of the allied infantry now engaging upon the outskirts of Ramillies.

$$\begin{array}{rcl} & 69 & \\ 69 + 18 & = & 87 \\ 69 + 18 + 21 & = & 108 \end{array} \left. \vphantom{\begin{array}{rcl} & 69 & \\ 69 + 18 & = & 87 \\ 69 + 18 + 21 & = & 108 \end{array}} \right\} \text{to } 68.$$

## MARLBOROUGH

It was at this moment that Marlborough arrived with his handful of English officers and orderlies. The long column of eighteen squadrons was still traversing the front, and had not yet assembled. The Duke sent instant orders to bring from his right the whole remaining cavalry except the English, twenty-one squadrons more, and, riding himself with his personal attendants into the whirlpool, he rallied the nearest Dutch squadrons. Transported by the energy of his war vision and passion, he led them himself again to the charge. This lapse from the duty of a commander-in-chief nearly cost him his life, and might well have cost the Allies the war.

The mile and a half space between Ramillies and Taviern had now become the scene of the largest cavalry battle of which there is any trustworthy account. In all nearly twenty-five thousand horsemen were brought into collision hand to hand, charging and countercharging with varying fortune for two hours. If we can imagine seven or eight modern cavalry divisions fighting in close order on such narrow ground, we shall realize that it was densely thronged with solid masses of flesh and blood in every stage of symmetry or dissolution. Wave after wave of charging horsemen, each trooper seeking with his sharp sword to slay his foe, were hurled in mob violence one upon another. Here numbers told. Where nearly all did their duty bravely the last reserves prevailed. The finest troops of France and the pride of French society, all the military splendour of the Court and age of Louis XIV, met the onslaught of the stern, tough Dutch in a white heat of disciplined passion. But then came Marlborough, with his inspiration and new lines of formed squadrons crashing in; and on the Taviern flank the twenty-one Danish squadrons, lapping round till Taviern village was at their backs, outflanked and rode down all in their path. The fourteen squadrons of French dragoons who had been dismounted to help retake Taviern and had been repulsed therefrom sought in vain to regain their led horses near the Tomb of Ottomond. These had stampeded in the tumult and galloped riderless about the countryside, some

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

even finding their old winter quarters twenty miles away. Their masters, running away on foot, fell victims to the swords of the Danes.

Still more waves of allied cavalry rolled upon the Maison du Roi as Marlborough's orders to bring all the cavalry, except the English, from the right wing were obeyed. Twenty-one fresh squadrons fell upon the harassed, overpressed chivalry of France. The odds against them were now five to three. In vain were their glorious golden banners, the royal emblems, the lilies of France, borne forward in sublime devotion. Nothing could withstand the hammerblows of repeated and seemingly inexhaustible reinforcements. The whole of the French cavalry of the right wing was shattered by superior numbers of very good troops who attacked them in front, in flank, and at the end almost in rear, and thus set about them from all sides.

It is difficult in this grand confusion to settle what actually happened to Marlborough himself. That he regarded the struggle at this point as decisive for the whole battle, that he led two charges by the Dutch in succession, that he remained trying to dominate events within a few hundred yards of the left of his infantry attack upon Ramillies, and was in the cavalry mêlée for about twenty minutes, is indisputable. Upon details, as would be natural, all accounts conflict. But certain definite impressions emerge. Marlborough charged for the second time against the victorious left flank of the Maison du Roi at between a quarter and half-past three. The Dutch squadrons which he led or which he succoured were broken. There was a pell-mell to the rear. Amid these blue- and grey-coated troops<sup>1</sup> the scarlet uniforms of the Commander-in-Chief and his personal retinue were conspicuous. The French troopers recognized him; they fired their long pistols at him, and individuals breaking from the ranks rode at him and overthrew him. Or, again (a better account), he turned his horse with the crowd of fugitives and tried to jump a sunken pathway or ditch. His horse pecked, and he fell to the ground. He was ridden over by the throng.

<sup>1</sup> *Uniformenkunde*, xvi, 1; quoted in *The Cavalry Journal*, July 1931.



## MARLBOROUGH

Napoleon's historian, perhaps under direction, makes this point :

Here we see how important it is to a general to be loved by the soldiers he leads. At the very sight of the danger which threatened their commander his squadrons thought above all of making themselves his rampart. They returned upon their own impulse to the charge. They hurled back the French who had penetrated their ranks, and the rescue of Marlborough was identified with a military success.<sup>1</sup>

More grim versions are found in the letters of British officers, actors in and eye-witnesses of the drama. Colonel Cranstoun, usually an acid critic, wrote a week after the battle :

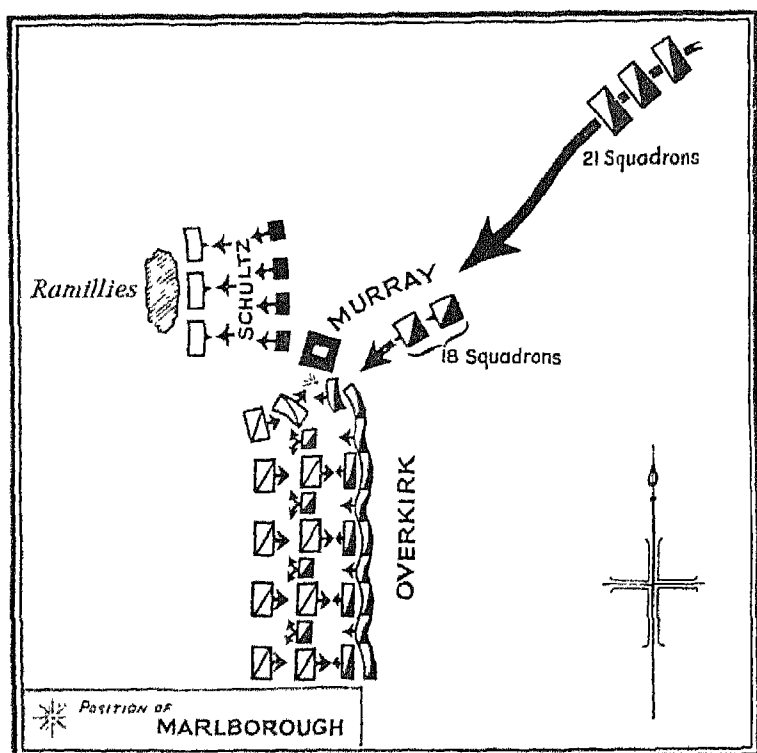
Major-General Murray, who was posted on the left of the second line, was so happy visibly to save the Duke of Marlborough, who fulfilled that day all the parts of a great captain, except in that he exposed his person as the meanest soldier. The attack being to be made by the Dutch on our left against the enemy's right where all the King's household and their best troops were, the Duke put himself at the head of the Dutch horse ; and the guards du corps, mousquetaires, and gens d'armes happening to encounter them, ten of the Dutch squadrons were repulsed, renversed and put in great disorder. The Duke, seeing this, and seeing that things went pretty well elsewhere, stuck by the weak part to make it up by his presence, and led still up new squadrons there to the charge, till at last the victory was obtained. It was here where those squadrons being renversed and in absolute *déroute* and the French mixed with them in the pursuit, the Duke, flying with the crowd, in leaping a ditch fell off his horse and some rode over him. Major-General Murray, who had his eye there and was so near he could distinguish the Duke in the flight, seeing him fall, marched up in all haste with two Swiss battalions to save him and stop the enemy who were hewing all down in their way. The Duke when he got to his feet again saw Major-General Murray coming up and ran directly to get in to his battalions. In the meantime Mr Molesworth quitted his horse and got the Duke mounted again, and the French were so hot in the pursuit that some of them before they could stop their

<sup>1</sup> Duclos, *Histoire de Jean, duc de Marlborough* (1808), ii, 160.

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

horses ran in upon the Swiss bayonets and were killed, but the body of them, seeing the two battalions, shore off to the right and retired.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that Marlborough had to run in the scrimmage some considerable distance on his feet towards the friendly



MARLBOROUGH'S INTERVENTION

Swiss battalions. His devoted aides-de-camp were about him, thinking only of saving him. Captain Molesworth got off and gave him his horse—"we got the Duke mounted again." He reached Major-General Murray's battalions a few minutes later. Behind their bayonets he was able to resume the control of the battle—at least in the centre. He must have remained at this point for more than an hour. It was under

<sup>1</sup> Portland Papers, H.M.C., iv, 309.

## MARLBOROUGH

the close and continuous fire of the French batteries in Ramillies ; but it was well placed for watching both the end of the cavalry conflict and the infantry onslaught now about to break on that village. Marlborough's staff, scattered in the fray, gradually rejoined him here. Presently his equerry, Colonel Bingfield,<sup>1</sup> arrived with his second charger.<sup>2</sup> The Duke changed horses. Bingfield was holding the off-side stirrup, and as Marlborough threw his leg over the saddle a cannon-ball cut off the faithful colonel's head. Orkney, who was on the other flank and no eyewitness, but had the view of the senior officers, writing the next day, said :

Milord Marlborough was rid over, but got other squadrons which he led up. Major Bingfield holding his stirrup to give him another horse was shot with a cannon ball which went through Marlborough's legs ; in truth there was no scarcity of 'em.<sup>3</sup>

This incident became popular not only in England but in Europe : we reproduce on the opposite page a playing-card of the time.<sup>4</sup>

We must now return to the British on the right. Orkney's attack upon Autréglise had made unexpected progress at the moment when Marlborough had ordered its recall. Ten or twelve British battalions, including the 1st Guards, had crossed the morass, and their first line had already broken into the houses and enclosures of the village. Lumley, with several English squadrons, made a show of covering their right. The French advanced large bodies of troops from their main line to resist the assault, but always retired as it advanced, with the purpose of drawing it into the open country where their overwhelming numbers of cavalry would be decisive. Fighting became severe. "Indeed," wrote Orkney the next day, "I think I never had more shot about my ears—both musketry and cannon."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Or Bringfield.

<sup>2</sup> Parker says he rode Molesworth's horse for an hour.

<sup>3</sup> "Letters of the First Lord Orkney," *English Historical Review*, April 1904, p. 315.

<sup>4</sup> This card is reproduced by His late Majesty's gracious permission from a quaint pack at Windsor Castle kept in the alcove where Queen Anne received the news of Blenheim.

<sup>5</sup> "Letters of the First Lord Orkney," *loc. cit.*

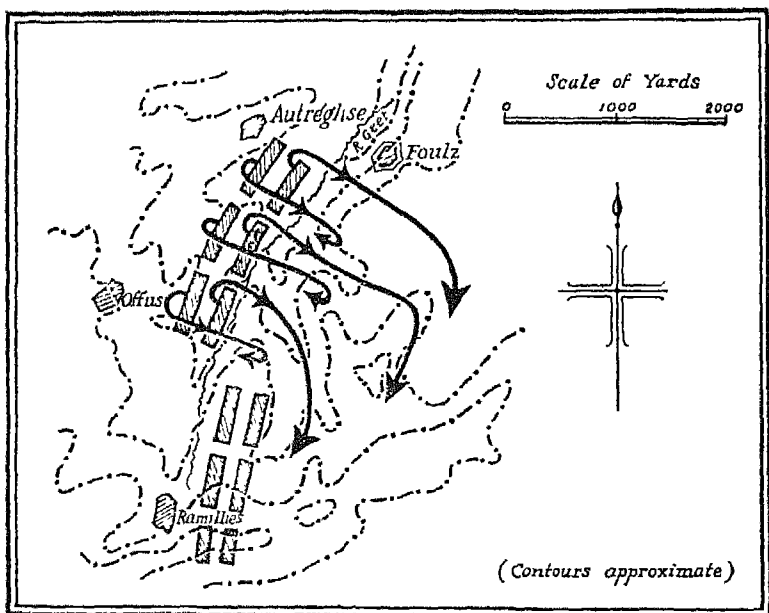


THE RAMILLIES PLAYING CARD  
 Royal Library, Windsor  
 By permission of His late Majesty King George V



## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

It was at this moment, when the British were advancing in the highest confidence, that an aide-de-camp from the Duke brought an order to retire. Marlborough, in order to impart the more reality to this attack, had not informed his valiant lieutenant that it was a feint. Orkney thought that the order had been sent him in the belief that it was impossible to



ORKNEY'S WITHDRAWAL

traverse the marsh, whereas he had in fact traversed it and was in full action. He therefore persisted. Messenger after messenger reached him in quick succession, but his blood was up and his vigorous infantry seemed to be driving all before them. Autréglise was in his grip. "But as I was going to take possession, I had ten aides-de-camp to me to come off." Last of all came Cadogan himself. The two generals argued in the storm of shot. Orkney urged that the High Command did not know how good were the prospects. Cadogan explained that the Duke had gone to the left with all the cavalry of the right wing, and that there

## MARLBOROUGH

was no horse to sustain the British foot. It was, he said, impossible to attack everywhere at once. It took all this to recall the vehement assault once it had been launched. When Orkney at length obeyed, he had to make a similar exertion to force his troops to retire. Many of them, in spite of the victory, nursed the grievance for years. They would not believe that the orders had come from the Duke; Cadogan, they grumbled, had relied too much on maps and theory, and acted on his own responsibility and thus balked them of their prey. However, the whole line was made to retire. Slowly and indignantly they withdrew, the Guards covering the harassed retreat. Once again they floundered through the marsh—re-formed and ascended the slopes of Foulz.

Then followed under Cadogan's eye a manœuvre which we cannot doubt was part of Marlborough's original design. When the two red lines reached the summit of the hill from which they had started, the original first line faced about and stood displayed upon the crest, while the second, which had not been engaged, descending into the dip in the rear, wheeled into column, and began marching towards the centre of the battle to form an additional reserve for the main attack on the Ramillies-Offus front.

Some writers have assigned to this transference of part of the British infantry from the right wing to the centre an importance which it does not deserve. It was a highly ingenious feature which would have played its part if the resistance of the enemy had been more obdurate. But events outstripped it. The decision of the cavalry struggle had already gained the day. The British infantry commanders, angry, eager to act, and excited, were for the most part only spectators, and not until the French in their front recoiled did their battalions join independently in the fighting.

The battle moved at such a pace that all the troops of both sides on the northern flank were left behind its headlong course. Marshal Villeroy and the Elector were still ardently awaiting the climax of the British assault upon the French left when grave news reached them from their right.

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

The cavalry of the right wing had been broken ; the *Maison du Roi* was defeated. Moreover, the flank was turned. Forthwith they spurred their horses from Offus along the main line of the army to the rear of Ramillies. They encountered a tide of fugitives, and were soon involved in the rout. Half an hour earlier they had been expecting the battle to begin. They now saw that it was lost beyond repair. They set themselves to form a new front bent back from Ramillies at right angles to their original line. At the same time they ordered a general retreat upon Judoigne. Ramillies was the pivot upon which all this turned. Here Count Maffei, a Bavarian general and the writer of valuable memoirs, commanded a strong brigade.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough's central conception of the battle had been the storm of Ramillies by the mass of his infantry ; and his feint with Orkney on the right, the capture of Taviars, and his onslaught with the whole of his cavalry on the left were but to be the preliminary and ancillary phases of this crowning result. In fact they had already decided it. The main infantry struggle had been growing in severity during the cavalry battle in the plain. Long lines of foot, backed by the whole reserves of the army, including now the British second line from the right, all aided by the fire of twenty heavy cannon and the bulk of the allied artillery, impended upon the enemy's centre.

With the destruction of the French right wing and the flower of their cavalry the third phase of Ramillies began. A series of decisions was taken by Marlborough and Overkirk, evidently working in full comprehension and harmony. About five o'clock the immediate pursuit of the French horse was stopped, and the whole of the victorious cavalry was ordered to wheel to the right and form a line facing north, in order to attack and roll up the French army from their exposed flank. Just as at Blenheim, Marlborough delayed his final attack until Eugene could re-form and strike at the same

<sup>1</sup> Two Maffei figure in this volume - (1) Marquis Alessandro Maffei, the Bavarian general, who eventually became a Field-Marshal, and (2) Count Annibale Maffei, the Savoyard diplomat, Minister in London, Plenipotentiary at Utrecht, and later (1713) Viceroy of Sicily.



## MARLBOROUGH

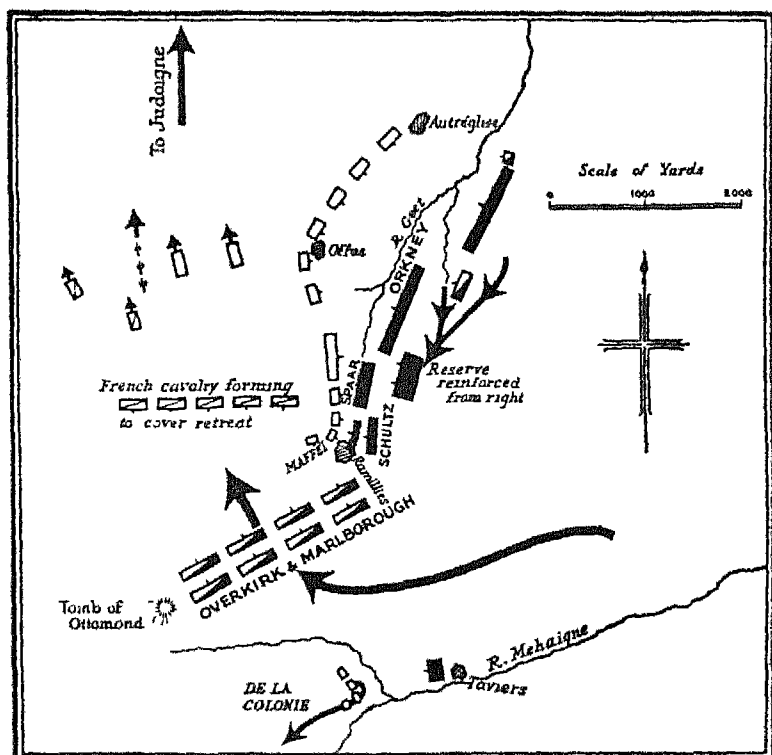
time, so now the infantry advance on Ramillies was suspended or slowed down until the cavalry got into their new position.

We have no record of these orders. We only see them in execution. The allied infantry, who had begun their advance at about three o'clock, had little more than a mile to cover. Their leading brigades were on the outskirts of Ramillies by half-past three. Since then they had been in heavy action, attacking and counter-attacked. On the other hand, the allied cavalry, victorious at about five, did not resume their advance until they were completely formed upon the new front. This marked pause in the battle, in order to deliver a final blow in thorough combination, when Marlborough must already have felt assured of victory, gives us a measure of the way in which his mind worked on the battlefield. Neither the dazzle of success nor the ordeal of personal combat, neither the fall from his horse nor the breathlessness of his run, affected in the slightest degree his sense of proportion, or his perfect comprehension of the whole problem—at least from the moment when he was once again in his saddle. He had wrongly descended from his high station upon an immediate local need. He emerged from this violent personal experience, and instantly, as after the charge at Elixem, resumed his normal poise.

It was now six o'clock. Marlborough and Overkirk had reformed the whole of the allied cavalry almost at right angles to their original attack. They stretched in overwhelming strength from behind Ramillies to the Tomb of Ottomond. Both generals must have been brilliantly served by their staffs and subordinate commanders; for the feat of wheeling the whole front of more than a hundred squadrons, disordered by fierce action and triumphant pursuit, although it flowed naturally from the course of the battle and the Danish turning movement, is remarkable in cavalry history. This grand array now began a second resolute and orderly advance. Villeroy and the Elector by their personal exertions had managed to form a new cavalry front facing south against them, composed partly of rallied squadrons from the plain, but mainly of the fifty fresh squadrons hitherto idle upon the

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

French left. This new front rested upon the remnants of Maffei's unlucky brigade, which now clung to the rear of Ramillies, also facing south, and manning a sunken road. Thus the French army was re-formed in a right angle, one side of which comprised the whole of their cavalry remaining



THE NEW FRONT

on the field; and the other (from Ramillies to Autréglise) of their infantry. Behind this evidently shaken screen the Marshal hoped to withdraw his artillery and transport wagons and make a respectable retreat through Judoigne across the Dyle.

This picture was no sooner created than it was dissolved. The advance of the allied cavalry was not resisted. The fifty squadrons from the French left, appalled by the disaster

## MARLBOROUGH

to their comrades in the plain and to the whole army, would not face the coming charge. They turned their horses' heads and melted from the field. Count Maffei at the angle or hinge of the position suffered the same shock as the Old Campaigner had sustained at the Schellenberg.

I then saw coming towards us a line of hostile cavalry who, having broken our right, were advancing to surround the village; but as this cavalry was coming from the side from which I naturally had expected our own to arrive, I thought at first that they must be our people, and I had not even the slightest suspicion to the contrary when I saw that they stopped two or three hundred paces from us without doing anything, although they could have attacked us from the rear. I did not notice the green cockade which they wore in their hats, which was indeed so small that it could hardly have been discerned at the distance. Thus convinced that they were our friends, I made up my mind to collect all the infantry I could to [complete the front]. . . . I went towards the nearest of these squadrons to instruct their officer, but instead of being listened to was immediately surrounded and called upon to ask for quarter.<sup>1</sup>

This he was compelled to do at the point of sword and pistol, and thereafter became prisoner of war. The hinge was broken.

And now the whole of the allied infantry, including several English battalions from Orkney's command, crashed into the French line between Ramillies and Offus, and to the north of Offus. Lumley, with the British cavalry, hitherto inactive on the extreme right, at length got across the Geet, followed by Orkney, and, piercing the crumbling front, cut directly on to the line of the French retreat.

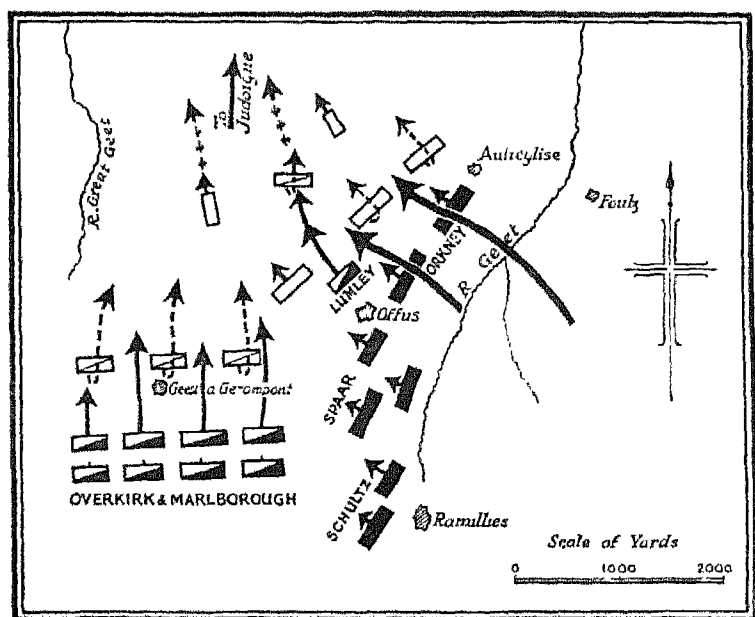
We have the definite record from numerous witnesses of that almost unknown feature in European warfare of that epoch, charges at the gallop. The King's Dragoon Guards and the Royal Scots Greys compelled whole battalions to lay down their arms. The infantry Régiment du Roi, caught at the moment they were picking up the knapsacks they

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Marquis Maffei* (1740), ii, 129.

## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

had discarded for the battle, were cut to pieces or captured almost to a man.

Now the whole French army broke and collapsed together. Their left drew off northward across country in fair order. Orkney relates how Lumley asked him to hurry on with his infantry, as the cavalry could not deal alone with that part



THE PURSUIT

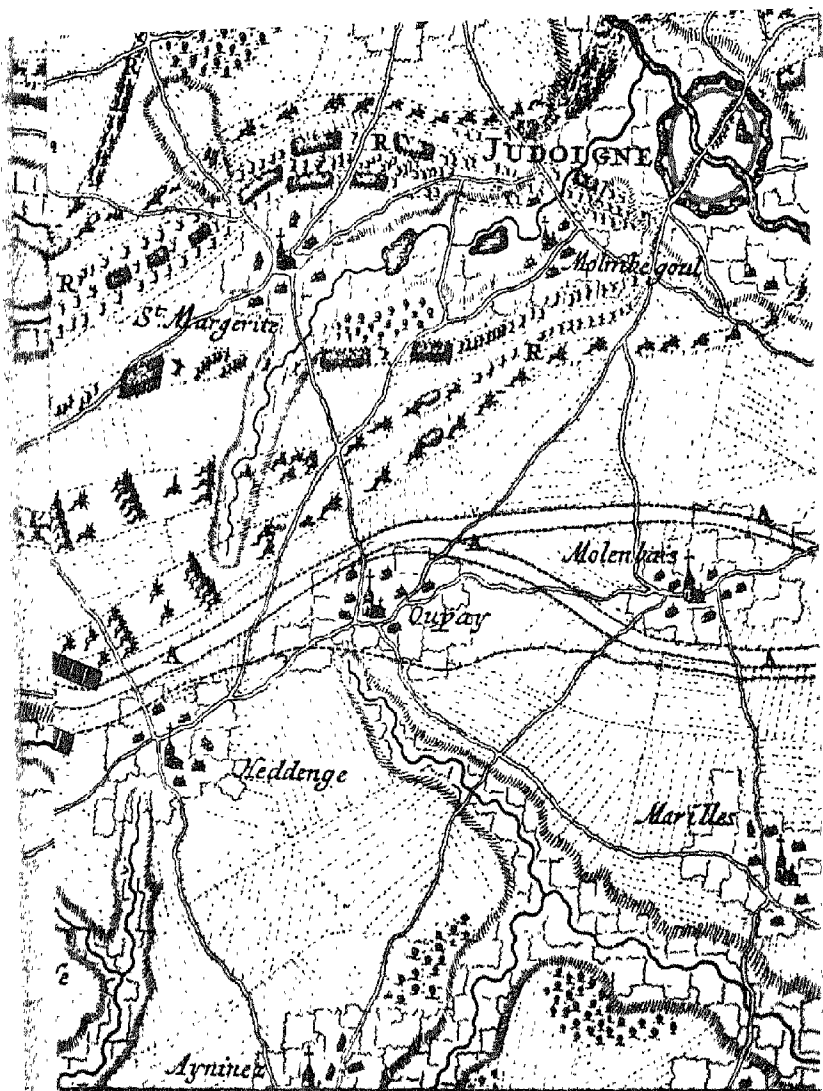
of the French infantry which was unbroken. "If," says Orkney, "I could only have got up in time we should have taken eight or nine battalions." The main part of the French centre fled along the road to Judoigne, but this road was blocked by the transport of the army. The remaining troops, impeded by the obstacle, dispersed and scattered over the countryside, for the main part throwing away their arms to hasten their flight, which achieved itself by its rapidity. Another long stream fled panic-stricken westward towards Wavre. The Old Campaigner behind Taviers found himself

## MARLBOROUGH

completely cut off by the floods of allied cavalry which covered the plain as far as the Tomb of Ottomond, and were everywhere charging and pursuing the flying French. He was by no means at a loss. As the shadows fell upon the battlefield he marched off with his four battalions and many fugitives who accompanied him, or whom he had rescued from the swamp, in the opposite direction towards Namur, which he reached the next morning.

Thus, in the space of four hours, between three and seven o'clock, the entire magnificent French army was shattered and scattered into utter rout and ruin. All their baggage, their cannon, trophies innumerable, five thousand unwounded prisoners, fell to the victors. The pursuit for a considerable time was merciless, and thousands of flying men were denied all quarter and cut down. So rapid had been the transformation, and the day was already so far advanced, that darkness fell without the full realization of their victory coming home to the allied commanders. Nearly all the accounts of Ramillies written immediately after the battle give the impression that their writers only very imperfectly understood the completeness of their triumph. Under the burden of their long march to the battlefield, worn by the excitement of the day, baffled by the rapidity with which the French recoiled and ran before them, scattered and unlinked by the sudden collapse of the hostile front, they fell forward as through a suddenly opened door in very great disorganization. The orders and the urge of every one were to press forward into the night; and when each brigade or regiment halted they had only vague ideas of their own whereabouts, and still less of that of their friends and foes. "We might have been a defeated army," says Orkney, "for the confusion we were in." They had, in fact, fought a great battle and marched twenty-five miles across country in as many hours.

The pursuit roared away to the north. At midnight Marlborough and his headquarters staff, with a heavy column of cavalry, was near Meldert, more than twelve miles beyond the field of battle. He still wished to press on, but his guide was lost, and he was forced to a brief halt. He had been nineteen



### EXPLICATIE

de Judoigne Oorlog

Colones tegen den Wyand

de van Battaille  
maats

de Jagers van Franguenie

de Jagers van Franguenie

om de Telt van Franguenie

**L** Kannon met denige Kannoniers om de gemelde Telt van Franguenie  
te beschieten en te Dorey Ofsen  
**M** de twee Kannonen die by de voor gemaakte Batt: gelyk  
werde. Om den Wyand vort de Jagers van Franguenie te verdragen  
**N** de Wyandseke leguad. Dree: gelyk met twee Batt:  
om haer Infanterie by Franguenie te souteneren  
**O** leguadrons van de Gaskische Regter Wygel op het Wyand  
van de Jagers om de Linker Wygel te souteneren  
**P** nar dat des Wyands Regter Wygel inde Reute lagh so  
formeerde sich omse Cavallery om den Wyand inde Flang te slaan  
**Q** Naas waer sich den Wyand wyngich tyts Setten om haer  
Retraite te Decken



## THE BATTLE OF RAMILLIES

hours in the saddle. He was bruised and shaken by his fall, and worn by his physical exertions. He knew he had gained one of the greatest battles of history. His cloak was spread upon the ground, and he was about to throw himself upon it for a few hours' sleep, when one more thought—eminently characteristic at this moment—occurred to him. Goslinga, the field Deputy, who might be either so great a help or hindrance in future operations, was at hand. Marlborough saw the opportunity of paying him the finest compliment that could be conceived. He invited him to share the cloak of the Commander-in-Chief on the night of victory. However, as the reader will learn, this pearl was cast in vain.



## CHAPTER VII

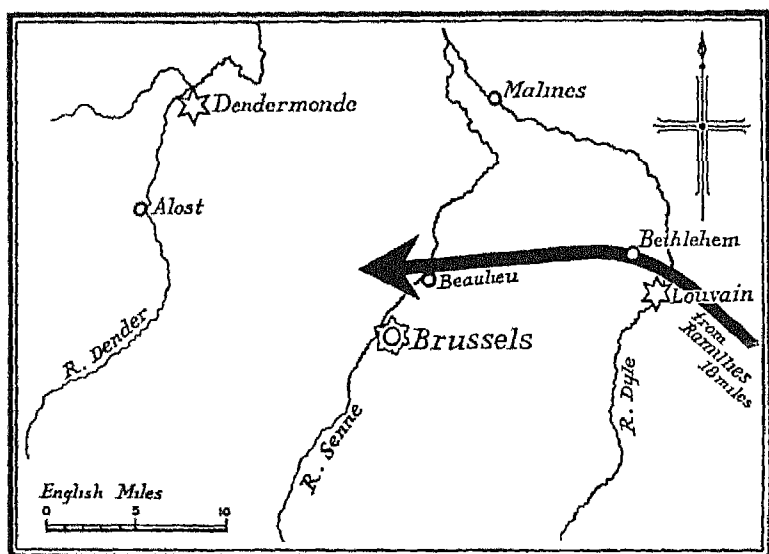
### THE CONQUEST OF BELGIUM

1706,  
June UNRELENTING pursuit magnified the victory of Ramillies. No battle in the eighteenth century produced comparable direct results. The fortress-barrier was for a while shorn away like grass before the scythe. As Blenheim saved Vienna, so Ramillies conquered the Netherlands. Cities and towns, the masterpieces of Vauban, any one of which would have been the prize of a campaign of King William, capitulated on all sides. The rout and temporary destruction of the French field army led to a collapse so far-reaching and so unexpected that it dwarfed even the shock of battle. To measure rightly this prodigy we must recall the mile-by-mile methods of those days, the limited means of offence and movement, and the habits of thought engrained in military minds by a generation of this kind of war.

Before midnight of May 24 Orkney's British and the leading brigades of Dutch infantry under General Churchill had orders to force the Dyle. The pontoon train and all available cannon were pressed forward along the crowded roads. The British cavalry were soon upon the head-streams of the river. As he knew he had captured all the French artillery on the field, Marlborough was sure he could not be withstood. In fact there was no resistance. By noon on the 25th his advance-guards appeared before the gates of Louvain. This stronghold, which he had longed to possess in the autumn of 1703 and in the summer of 1706, surrendered to the trumpet. At midnight after the battle Marshal Villeroy and the Elector had held haggard, dishevelled council by torchlight in the market-place. Fugitives of high distinction, veteran leaders of so many years of strife, gathered as they rode in, stained and seared. Survivors of the *Maison du Roi* clustered about

## THE CONQUEST OF BELGIUM

them. There was no difference of opinion among the generals. All were agreed that neither the Dyle nor even the Senne could be held. The French army could only be rallied behind the Scheldt—if there. In that direction all formed bodies of troops remaining were ordered to retreat with the utmost speed. Of the brilliant army of sixty-three thousand



THE DIRECT PURSUIT AFTER RAMILLIES

men which had set out so confidently in the morning to seek a decision of arms, barely fifteen thousand were under control. Twelve thousand had fallen killed or wounded in the clash. Nearly six thousand were prisoners of the Allies.<sup>1</sup> The rest had dispersed to every quarter of the compass, seeking the gates of some friendly town. For more than a month no semblance of a French army could keep the field.

Marlborough could not know all this. Indeed, his standard of values, inculcated by so many years of war in this obstinate theatre, expanded itself only day by day. At first no one

<sup>1</sup> John Millner (*Journal of Marches . . .* (1733)) says: killed, 6759, wounded, 5328, prisoners, 5729. Abel Boyer (*Annals of the Reign of Queen Anne* (1703-13)) says: killed, 5000; wounded, —; prisoners, 4600.

## MARLBOROUGH

realized how overwhelming had been the victory, still less its reverberations. But the Duke thrust forward with every scrap of moral and physical energy he could extort from himself or from his soldiers. In this temper, but always with considerable precaution and always against the stubborn drag of supplies, he traversed Louvain on the 25th, and encamped on the heights of Bethlehem with above fifty thousand men. On the 26th his headquarters stood upon the Senne at the castle of Beaulieu, midway between Malines and Brussels. Both these places were summoned to surrender. On the 28th the army halted for two days, having since the 23rd advanced fifty miles. Detachments were sent forward to secure the crossings of the Dender and the Scheldt.

Intent upon these new gains, and especially of the capital, Marlborough had already forgotten Ramillies. The French cannon lay where they had been abandoned among the dead ; and while the allied army rolled forward on its irresistible career the French command in Namur had the enterprise to send out teams of horses and drag them inside their ramparts. The heave of Marlborough's advance and the exclusive intensity of his forward impulse cannot be better judged than from this curious lapse. This was no time to count or even collect spoils and trophies. The dominating military objectives lay ahead : to drive deep into the fortress zone and to keep the French from the sea flank ; to isolate and perhaps soon besiege Antwerp ; to strike at Ghent and Oudenarde on the Scheldt, were prizes which threw past triumph into twilight.

And now a political revolution in Belgium supervened. Spectators of the French disaster, confronted by the massive invasion of the allied army, dazzled by the sword of the Captain-General, not only the magistrates of Brussels and the Estates of Brabant, but the whole Spanish authority in the Netherlands deserted the cause of the Two Crowns and declared their allegiance to Charles III. The prolonged French occupation, with its insolences and exactions, not less than the fear of hostile armies, sustained the decision of the rulers with the ardent support of the entire population. In

## THE CONQUEST OF BELGIUM

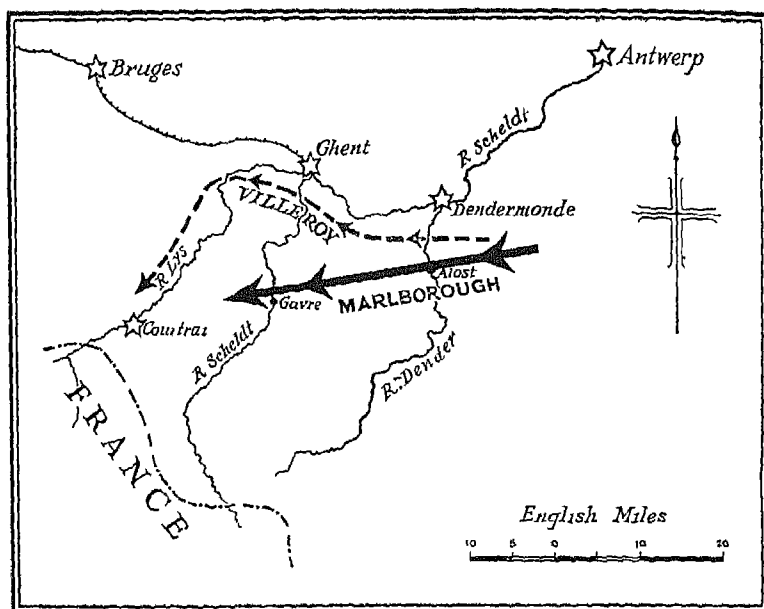
a trice the conquest of Belgium by the Allies became the act of its deliverance from the thralldom of Louis XIV.

Marlborough was not furnished with formal powers to deal with so surprising a transformation. There was no time to communicate with London or even The Hague. He therefore took everything upon himself. Keeping in close accord with Goslinga and the other Deputies, he received on the 27th at Beaulieu a joint delegation from the Brussels magistracy and the Estates. He accepted their change of allegiance. He guaranteed all religious and civil rights. He renewed the famous charter of "La Joyeuse Entrée"; and in an order to the allied army he threatened "death without mercy" to any officer or soldier found guilty of plundering or molesting the inhabitants. These measures were far-reaching, and not only the citizens but the whole countryside came over to the Allies. The Spanish garrisons in several fortresses turned the French out of the citadels, and held them for Charles III. Food and forage poured in from the farms in response to British and Dutch cash. French stragglers were caught and brought in by the peasantry. French detachments hurried to disentangle themselves from the hostile population, and overtake the general retreat. Meanwhile the Allies were able to draw troops from their garrisons. The Prussians, Lunebergers, and Hanoverians began to move forward from the Rhine, and Villeroy was justified in reporting that Marlborough was soon to be at the head of ninety thousand men. Early on the 28th Charles Churchill took possession of Brussels, and that evening Marlborough made his public entry into the city. The magistrates received him with the pomp of ancient ceremonial, and the populace welcomed him with hectic enthusiasm and every sign of gratitude. Flanked by his own garrisons in Brussels and Malines, he could now march forward to the Scheldt.

Villeroy and the Elector had hoped to halt near Ghent, behind the Lys and the Scheldt, whence they could cover Bruges and Ostend and thereby flank any allied movement on Antwerp. Up to this point, and especially while the

## MARLBOROUGH

French were under immediate shock of the battle, the pursuit had been direct. Now Marlborough moved across Villeroy's communications with France.<sup>1</sup> His impending passage of the Scheldt at Gavre threatened these to such an extent that Villeroy withdrew to Courtrai.



MARLBOROUGH THREATENS VILLEROY'S COMMUNICATIONS  
(MAY 30)

Marlborough's letter to Sarah after the battle is a moving document. In its tenderness, its modesty, its reverence and composure, and in its thought for others, it reveals his natural glory. Amid the press of events and in extreme fatigue his chief thought was for Bingfield's widow and mother.

*Monday, May 24, 11 o'clock*

I did not tell my dearest soul in my last the design I had of engaging the enemy if possible to a battle, fearing the concern she has for me might make her uneasy; but I can now give her

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough to Heinsius, May 30-31, Vreede, pp. 29-30.





## THE CONQUEST OF BELGIUM

the satisfaction of letting her know that on Sunday last we fought, and that God Almighty has been pleased to give us a victory. I must leave the particulars to this bearer, Colonel Richards, for having been on horseback all Sunday, and after the battle marching all night, my head aches to that degree that it is very uneasy to me to write. Poor Bringfield, holding my stirrup for me, and helping me on horseback, was killed. I am told that he leaves his wife and mother in a poor condition. I can't write to any of my children, so that you will let them know that I am well, and that I desire they will thank God for His preserving me. And pray give my duty to the Queen, and let her know the truth of my heart, that the greatest pleasure I have in this success is that it may be a great service to her affairs ; for I am sincerely sensible of all her goodness for me and mine. Pray believe me when I assure you that I love you more than I can express.<sup>1</sup>

To Godolphin he presented some details :

*Monday, May 24*

I believe my last might give you expectation of an action. We have been in perpetual motion ever since ; and on Sunday last we came in presence with the enemy, who came with the same intentions I had, of fighting. We began to make our lines of battle about eleven o'clock, but we had not all our troops till two in the afternoon, at which time I gave orders for attacking them. The first half-hour was very doubtful, but I thank God after that we had success in our attacks, which were on a village in the centre ; and on the left we pursued them three leagues, and the night obliged us to give it over. Having been all Sunday, as well as last night on horseback, my head aches to that degree that I must refer you to the bearer. I shall only add that we beat them into so great a consternation that they abandoned all their cannon ; their baggage they had sent away in the morning, being resolved to fight. They had 128 squadrons, and 74 battalions ; we had 123 squadrons and 73 battalions ; so that you see the armies were near of a strength ; but the general officers which were taken tell us that they thought themselves sure of victory by having all the King of France's household, and with them the best troops of France. You will easily believe this victory has lost us a good many men and

<sup>1</sup> *Cove*, II, 354.



## MARLBOROUGH

officers ; but I thank God we have but three English regiments that have much suffered ; the Dutch horse and foot have suffered more than we. I am going to get a little rest, for if our bread comes by six this evening, I will then march to Louvain this night, in hopes to find them in such disorder as that we may be encouraged to attack them behind their lines, for they can have no cannon but what they can take out of Louvain. I beg you will assure the Queen that I act with all my heart, and you know how necessary it is for her affairs that we should have good success.

Poor Bringfield is killed, and I am told he leaves his wife and mother in a bad condition.<sup>1</sup>

There was a courier twice a week, and Marlborough's letters tell the tale incomparably. On the 27th he wrote to Godolphin :

Since my last we have not only passed the Dyle, but are masters of Louvain, Malines, and Brussels ; you will see by what I send to Mr Secretary Harley what has passed between me and the states of Brabant, which I found assembled at Brussels. As there could not be time for orders from England, I hope her Majesty will approve of what I have done. . . . *The consequence of this battle is likely to be of greater advantage than that of Blenheim ; for we have now the whole summer before us, and with the blessing of God, I will make the best use of it.* For as we had no council of war before this battle, so I hope to have none this whole campaign ; and I think we may make such a campaign as may give the Queen the glory of making an honourable and safe peace ; for the blessing of God is certainly with us. . . .<sup>2</sup>

And to Sarah :

I have been in so continued a hurry ever since the battle of Ramillies, by which my blood is so heated that when I go to bed I sleep so unquietly that I cannot get rid of my headache, so that I have not as yet all the pleasure I shall enjoy, of the blessing God has been pleased to give us by this great victory. My Lord Treasurer will let you see what I send by this express to Mr Secretary Harley, by which you will see that we have done in four days what we should have thought ourselves happy if

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, ii, 355.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

## THE CONQUEST OF BELGIUM

we could have been sure of it in four years. I bless God that He has been pleased to make me the instrument of doing so much service to the Queen, England, and all Europe, for it is most certain that we have destroyed the greatest part of the best troops of France. My dearest soul, I have now that great pleasure of thinking that I may have the happiness of ending my days in quiet with you.

I have appointed next Sunday for the army to return thanks to God for the protection He has been pleased to give us. For on this occasion it has been very visible, for the French had not only greater numbers than we, but also all their best troops. I hope the Queen will appoint a speedy thanksgiving day at St Paul's, for the goodness of God is so very great that if He had suffered us to have been beaten, the liberties of all the allies had been lost. . . . My dearest life, I am ever yours.

Brussels has submitted to King Charles the Third, and I am promised that in eight days the states of Brabant will also proclaim him.<sup>1</sup>

On the 31st he wrote to Godolphin :

MERLEBECK, NEAR GHENT

We did this day design the passing the Scheldt at Gavre, by which we should have cut the French army from their old lines ; but they rather chose to abandon Ghent, which they did this morning at break of day, so that I have camped the left of the army at Gavre and the right at this place. I shall send to-morrow a detachment to Bruges, they having also abandoned that town. As soon as we can have the cannon, and what is necessary, we shall attack Antwerp ; after which I should be glad the next place might be Ostend ; for unless they draw the greatest part of their army from Germany, they will not be able to hinder us from doing what we please on this side their lines. I tell you my thoughts, but if you think there is anything better for the Queen's interest, I shall endeavour to do it, having that more at heart than my own life.<sup>2</sup>

To Sarah :

MERLEBECK, NEAR GHENT

June 1

We are now masters of Ghent, and to-morrow I shall send some troops to Bruges. *So many towns have submitted since the*

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, ii, 366.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

## MARLBOROUGH

*battle, that it really looks more like a dream than truth.* My thoughts are now turning to the getting everything ready for the siege of Antwerp, which place alone, in former years, would have been thought good success for a whole campaign ; but we have the blessing of God with us, and I hope we shall do more in this campaign than was done in the last ten years' war in this country. . . .<sup>1</sup>

On June 3 :

Every day gives us fresh marks of the great victory ; for since my last, which was but two days ago, we have taken possession of Bruges and Damme, as also Oudenarde, which was besieged the last war by the King, with sixty thousand men, and he was at last forced to raise the siege. In short there is so great a panic in the French army as is not to be expressed. Every place we take declares for King Charles. . . .

You are very kind in desiring I would not expose myself. Be assured I love you so well, and am so desirous of ending my days quietly with you, that I shall not venture myself but when it is absolutely necessary ; and I am sure you are so kind to me, and wish so well to the common cause, that you had rather see me dead, than not to do my duty. I am so persuaded that this campaign will bring us a good peace that I beg of you to do all you can that the house at Woodstock may be carried up as much as possible, that I may have a prospect of living in it.<sup>2</sup>

To Godolphin :

MERLEBECK

June 3

. . . I have sent Brigadier Cadogan with six squadrons of horse, to offer terms to the town and citadel of Antwerp. If I can have that place without a siege, it will gain us a month. I am doing all I can to gain the governor of Dendermonde, which place would be of great consequence. They have let out the waters, so that we cannot attack it. As soon as we have Antwerp, and can get our artillery to Ostend, we shall attack the place, at which time it would be necessary that the Dunkirk squadron should help us. *You see that I make use of the consternation.*

Marsin will join them to-morrow with 18 battalions and 14 squadrons, and I am assured that orders are gone to Marshal de

<sup>1</sup> Cox, ii, 368.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

## THE CONQUEST OF BELGIUM

Villars to send 30 battalions more, and 40 squadrons; so that Prince Louis [the Margrave] may act if he pleases. I have ordered the Hanover troops to join me, and we hope to have the Prussians, which will enable me to make the detachment for the descent. If Prince Louis makes use of this occasion to press the French in Alsace, as I will, with the blessing of God, in this country, the King of France will be obliged to draw some troops from Italy, *by which Turin may be saved*. We have nothing now that stops us but the want of cannon; for the French cannot have their troops from Germany in less than three weeks. We march to-morrow to Deynse, and the French are retired behind Menin, by which you see we are at liberty to attack Ostend and Nieuport, if we had our artillery.<sup>1</sup>

And to Heinsius, June 1: "Dendermonde is under water, but I am endeavouring to make the Governor propositions that may tempt him to declare for King Charles; *for if we had that place, Ostend, and Audener [Oudenarde], all this country would be covered by those three places.*"<sup>2</sup>

The Duke could now write letters to the chiefs and princes of the Alliance, which followed hard upon the announcements he had made to them of the impending battle. His first, on the 24th, to the King of Prussia, contained both sting and appeal. "I profoundly regret that Your Majesty's troops have not had a share in this glorious action; however, I will not despair yet of seeing them join the army. I am sure that not one of Your Majesty's generals would take more care of them."<sup>3</sup> The Prussian Colonel Grumbkow was the bearer of this. Marlborough waited till next day, when he had passed the Dyle, to address the States-General: "It is with double joy," he wrote, "that I give myself the honour of writing to their high and mighty Lordships this letter from Louvain." . . . And then, looking back on his frustrated efforts in 1703 and 1705, he added, "*où il y a longtemps que je souhaitais être pour le bien de la cause commune.*"<sup>4</sup>

Twelve of these letters reporting the victory are printed in

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, ii, 371.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 521.

<sup>3</sup> Vreede, pp 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 523.

## MARLBOROUGH

the *Dispatches*. They were as important a part of his warfare as the military movements. They are in the main variants of one another. Cardonnel was a master of correspondence; but to the Emperor and ruling sovereigns the Duke wrote in his own hand, and the labour of scribing must alone have been severe. These personal letters from this extraordinary English general announcing his victories fortified the whole Alliance. To Eugene he sent a detailed account of the battle and its preliminary movements. He had marched on the Saturday "to seize the gap between the Mehaigne and the Great Geet." His information was that the enemy did not mean to fight before Monday, "*ne croyant pas que nous oserions aller à eux.*" The armies were in presence before noon: both sides waited to range their lines of battle and to plant the batteries, which began to fire a little after midday, and at two o'clock

we attacked the village of Ramillies, which sustained the right of their infantry and where they had their strongest battery *avec beaucoup de monde*. The fight warmed up and lasted for some time with very great fury, and at last the enemy were compelled to bend. We there took their cannon and made many prisoners and having continued the action with the same vigour, infantry as well as cavalry, up to four or five o'clock, when the enemy began to retreat, we pursued them continually till long into the night. . . . We halted for only two hours in the night and were on the march before daybreak to gain the Dyle, of which we had determined to force a passage to-day at dawn. But the enemy have spared us the trouble, having retired last night towards Brussels, so that we have already occupied Louvain and our whole army has passed the river without any opposition. . . . Your Highness can judge from this the losses of the enemy and the consternation in which they lie. We propose to march to-morrow upon Brussels to exploit their disorder and try to close with them or compel their further retreat. Nothing could justify making such demands upon the troops after so violent an engagement except the need of pushing them to extremes before Marshal Marsin can join them, as he might do in four or five days.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 525. In French.

## THE CONQUEST OF BELGIUM

The account which he gave to the Margrave mentioned that "the Maison du Roi has been almost all cut to pieces," and he added, "I am sure Your Highness will soon feel the advantages of our success by the detachments which will have to be drawn from the Rhine, and that will give you a chance of acting on your side."

The return messengers from England brought a flood of congratulations. "I want words," said the Queen,

to express my true sense of the great service you have done to your country, and I hope it will be a means to confirm all good and honest men in their principles, and frighten others from being troublesome. . . . I must repeat my earnest request that you should be careful of yourself.<sup>1</sup>

She wrote again (May 21/June 2) a letter which gains from being printed in its original form :

\* The great Glorious Success wch God Almighty has bin pleased to Bless you wth, & his preservation of your person, one can never thank him enough for, & next to him all things are owing to you ; it is impossible for me ever to Say or doe much as I ought in return of your great & faithful Services to me, but I will endeavour by all ye actions of my life to Shew you how truly Sensible I am of them. The account you Send by mr Pitt of ye great progress you have made since ye Batle is astonishing, the Blessing of God is Sertinly with you, may he Still continue to protect you, & make you the happy instrument of giveing a lasting peace to Europe ; I never durst venture to Send ye enclosed by ye post for feare of any accident but Stanhope<sup>2</sup> going to see her father I would not miss yt opertunety it being what may be usefull on some occasions, I intended to have made use of this opertunety to writt my mind more freely then I can by ye post, but I have bin in Such a Continual hurry these three or four days & am Soe still yt I can only now desire you to forgive all ye faults in my letter of fryday last wch was writt when I was soe Sleepy I could hardly keep my eyes open, & to be assured yt I Shall ever be wth all truth your humble Servant.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Conduct*, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Stanhope, one of the Queen's maids of honour, a daughter of Alexander Stanhope, Envoy at The Hague, sister of the famous Stanhope (at this time in Spain).

<sup>3</sup> Blenheim MSS.

## MARLBOROUGH

St John and Harley vied with each other in their enthusiasm. Godolphin showed signs of the pressures to which he was constantly subjected. He wrote on May 17/28 :

God be thanked for the good news you sent us by Richards, who arrived here yesterday evening, and more particularly for the great escape you have had in your own person. I am very sensible you could not avoid exposing yourself upon this occasion ; but where so much consequence turns upon one single life, you must allow your friends the liberty to think and say it ought not to be done without an absolute necessity. . . . You may depend that her Majesty will not fail to take care of poor Mr Bringfield's widow.<sup>1</sup>

And again, on May 24/June 5 :

The Queen is come to town to give God thanks next Thursday for your victory. I assure you I shall do it from every vein within me, having scarce anything else to support either my heart or my head. The animosity and inveteracy one has to struggle with is unimaginable, not to mention the difficulty of obtaining things to be done that are reasonable, or of satisfying people with reason when they are done.<sup>2</sup>

It was not until he woke on the morning of May 26 that Louis XIV learned that his finest army had suffered disaster in Flanders. No formal dispatch conveyed the details, but the courier from Louvain brought a short letter from Marshal Villeroy to Dangeau, the Court Chamberlain, telling him how bravely his son had fought, and that he would surely recover from the scalp wound he had received from a sabre. Thereafter there was a silence of six days. "I was at Versailles," says Saint-Simon. "Never has one seen such anxiety and consternation. . . . In ignorance of what had happened and of the consequences of such an unfortunate battle, and amid every one's fears for their kith and kin, the days seemed years."<sup>3</sup> The King was reduced to asking his courtiers what they had heard. At length, finding suspense intolerable, he astonished Versailles by sending Chamillart in person to Villeroy's headquarters, thus leaving the Ministries of War and Finance headless. Chamillart reached Lille on the 31st,

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, ii, 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>3</sup> Saint-Simon, iv, 427.

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and found Villeroy, reinforced by Marsin, around Courtrai. He had retired successively from the Dyle, the Senne, the Dender, and the Scheldt; he had abandoned the whole of Spanish Flanders. He was content if he could hold the French fortress line along the Lys. Chamillart spent three days in long separate discussions with the Marshal and the Elector, and heard versions of the battle and the retreat from all quarters. He found Villeroy dominated by the sense of Marlborough's power; but equally convinced of his own blamelessness, and, indeed, that he had saved the remnants of the army by his prolonged, rapid retreat.

French writers have blamed the Marshal for giving up so much territory, so many fine positions and important places. They overlook the alternative. This was to fight another battle. All Marlborough's marches had shown that this was what he sought. Fortresses were not his primary aim. His quarry was the French army; and the French army could not face him. Its condition was such that if caught in grapple it would be utterly destroyed. Therefore Marshal Villeroy comforted himself in defeat with the fact that in giving ground he had taken no half-measures.

To the King he wrote with dignified assurance. Three main criticisms were focused upon him by his generals: first, that he had accepted battle without knowing the strength of the enemy, and without waiting for the troops of Marshal Marsin; secondly, that he had not reinforced his right and held the village of Tavieres in superior strength; and, thirdly, that he had so marshalled his army that the battle had been lost without its main strength being engaged. To all these points the Marshal addressed himself pertinaciously, observing, however, that as a man of the world he knew well "that good reasons are no explanation for catastrophe." He finished his lengthy justification, "I have said more than enough. I end by taking the liberty of telling Your Majesty that the only happy day which I foresee in my life will be that of my death."<sup>1</sup>

To this Chamillart, having returned to Versailles, replied

<sup>1</sup> Pelet, vi, 41.



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in due course (June 16) with severely reasoned rebuttal. It was resolved to remove the Marshal from his command. The feelings of his army and even such public opinion as the French Court could nourish made this step imperative. But Villeroy was a personage of high consequence. He was a veteran general; he was a great gentleman. He was also the personal friend both of the King and of Mme de Maintenon. Napoleon's maxim "Dur aux grands" had not been born. The King's egotism, which now wore the guise of magnanimity, led him to treat Villeroy, who enjoyed the privilege of being in his inmost circle, with an extreme consideration. Elaborate procedures were accordingly used towards the defeated Marshal. He was offered alternative appointments, and for several weeks discreetly urged to resign. But when he continued as obstinate in holding his command as he had been in retreating from the enemy, patience was at length discarded. He was dismissed. Yet, even when forced to abrupt action, Louis practised the utmost politeness. "At our age," he said to Villeroy when he received him, "we must no longer expect good fortune."

The next measure was to re-create the field army. The resources of France seemed inexhaustible. Marlborough has given his own account of this process.

The method the King of France has taken to make good his word to the Elector of Bavaria, of putting him at the head of an army of 80,000 men, are the 18 battalions and 14 squadrons which came with the Marshal de Marsin; the detachment that is now marching from Alsace, of 30 battalions and 40 squadrons; and 14 battalions, which the Comte de Gassy commanded in the lines, which were not at the battle. These, joined with the troops that were at the battle, would make above 100,000 men. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Thus, after making provision for garrisons, there was speedily built up the largest French army with which Marlborough had been confronted. In that hour only one man was deemed capable of leading it. The Duke of Vendôme was recalled from Italy.

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough to Godolphin, June 28; Coxe, iii, 2.

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The strategic pursuit had lasted nearly a fortnight, had cleared all Brabant and much of Flanders, and had rendered the French army for the time being wholly ineffective. The easy gains of panic now ceased. The French were withdrawing into the main fortress zone and towards France. Further advance by Marlborough, especially if any siege was involved, depended upon the waterways. The rivers were still blocked by the French possession of Antwerp and Dendermond. Their fortresses at Ostend and Nieuport controlled the entrance to the canals leading to the Lys and the Scheldt. Marlborough was compelled to suspend his advance in order to clear the communications. He could take whichever fortress he wished and no one could gainsay him, but every siege took time and strength, and it was soon plain that half a dozen captures would be the limit of the campaign in Flanders and Northern France. On June 5 the allied army crossed the Scheldt and the Lys and camped at Arsele, where it could cover any siege necessary to open the communications.

The joyous news here reached Marlborough that Antwerp had capitulated. Summoned by Cadogan, the Spanish grandee in command declared for Charles III. The burghers endorsed his action; the Spanish and Walloon regiments came over to the Allies, and the French troops marched out upon terms. The gaining of this great prize, with all its strategic and commercial attributes, without the firing of a shot was deemed a wonder. "The hand of God," wrote Marlborough to the States-General, "appears visibly in all this, spreading such fear among the enemy as to compel them to surrender so many strong places and whole districts without the least resistance."<sup>1</sup> Leaving the army to wait for its artillery around Arsele, the Duke paid a flying visit to The Hague in order, as he wrote to Heinsius, "to settle with you what is proper for the descent, as also to let you know my thoughts for the plan of this campaign, which, with the blessing of God, I think may be such a one as may make France glad of a reasonable peace this winter."<sup>2</sup> He also wished to make arrangements for the administration

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 558.

<sup>2</sup> *Vreede*, p. 30.

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of the conquered cities and territories, and above all to press that the Dutch garrisons should join the army forthwith and to the last man possible. This would enable him to pursue his advantage in Flanders, and at the same time to provide the necessary troops for the descent upon the French coast so dear to the hearts of the English Cabinet, and now regarded by Marlborough as a timely operation. All was agreed with the utmost cordiality.

On the way back to the army Marlborough passed through Antwerp. On the night of the 11th the keys of the city were presented to him by the authorities with the remark that "they had never been delivered up to any person since the great Duke of Parma, and that after a siege of twelve months." He was greeted with enthusiasm by great crowds and escorted through the streets by all the notables in torchlight procession to the bishop's palace, where he was "splendidly entertained." On the 13th he rejoined the army, whose siege artillery was now drawing near.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

ARSELE  
June 7, 1706

. . . I am extremely obliged to you for your kind concern for my safety. I am now at an age not to take pleasure in exposing myself, but when I think it absolutely necessary. You can never say enough to the Queen for her goodness to me in the letter you sent me. Though I take myself to be a good Englishman, and wish well to the common cause, yet my great joy in this success is that it hath pleased God to make me the instrument of doing that which must be of great consequence to her service. . . . I take this time of going to The Hague, we being at a full stand for want of cannon; for the French being retreated into their own country behind their strong towns, have put the greatest part of their foot into Ostend, Nieuport, Ypres, Menin, Tournay, and Lille. The Marshal de Villeroy is camped with the rest of the French at Saint-Amand, and the Elector of Bavaria is at Lille. The capitulations for the surrender of the town and citadel of Antwerp were signed yesterday; so that we are now in possession of all Brabant. Our next thoughts will be for the attacking Nieuport and Ostend, which I see you have a great

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mind we should ; so that I beg there may be no time lost in sending such ships as are ready to cruise before those two places, which will be of great use to us. By the letters from Paris, we see they would have us believe that they are taking the necessary measures to have a superiority in this country, which I think they will never be able to do, unless they put themselves on the defensive in Italy, as well as in Germany. For the good of the common cause, I wish they may endeavour it, *for the men they have here will very unwillingly be brought to fight again this campaign.*<sup>1</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

June 14, 1706

If we take Ostend in any seasonable time, it will be much the best place for the transports to come to, and I will take care to have the troops there [*i.e.*, for the descent]. The efforts the French are making to have a strong army I am afraid will make it impossible for us to take Dunkirk this year ; but whenever we can have it, I agree with you that the best thing we can do is to spoil the harbour.<sup>2</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

ARSELE  
June 17, 1706

The troops designed for the siege of Ostend marched that way two days ago, and I shall march with what remains of the army to cover the siege to-morrow ; I have with me 50 battalions of foot and 99 squadrons of horse. I hope to have the Prussians and Hanoverians with me before the enemy can have their detachment from Germany.<sup>3</sup>

Overkirk, deflected from Nieuport by the opening of the sluices at the mouth of the Yser, conducted the siege of Ostend. Admiral Fairborne blockaded the harbour with a squadron of battleships from the main fleet and small craft from the coast flotillas, including the bomb-ketches *Blast* and *Salamander*. The citizens of Ostend adhered to the French garrison, and for three days both the fortifications and town were subjected to a severe bombardment from land and sea until, according to contemporary accounts,

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, II, 380.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

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“the place was near reduced to a heap of rubbish”—not for the last time in its history. On the second day, July 4, a Dutch battalion, preceded by a storming party of fifty British grenadiers, formed a lodgment upon the counterscarp, and after a vigorous sally by the besiegers Ostend surrendered. The French garrison, undertaking not to serve for six months, marched out “without marks of honour,” and the Spaniards mostly joined the Allies. Two Bourbon men-of-war of seventy and fifty guns and a quantity of smaller shipping, together with many colours, ninety cannon, and much ammunition, were captured with the fortress, the casualties of the Allies being five hundred men. Ostend deprived the enemy of a hitherto useful port for their galleys and privateers; it gave Marlborough a base nearer to the army than the Dutch rivers, and it placed in his hands the chief port of entry for English cloth into the reopened markets of Belgium.

Blackadder, of the Cameronians—now a major—had fought with the British right against Autréglise. After Blenheim he had drawn the moral that the victory was due to the goodness of the cause, and the slaughter among the English to their blasphemous language. Now at Ramillies, while the victory which God had granted had been no less remarkable, the English troops had got off very lightly. Another explanation was readily supplied by the valiant major’s piety.

I observe also that the English had but small part in this victory. They are the boldest sinners in our army; therefore God will choose other instruments. Also the English have got a great vogue and reputation for courage, and are perhaps puffed up upon it; and so God humbles their pride, as it were, by throwing them by. I was easy, and helped to discharge my duty well. We were very much fatigued with the pursuit, and lay all night in the open fields without cover. Give me grace, O Lord, never to forget this great and glorious day at Ramillies.

The effects of this battle are most surprising; towns that we thought would have endured a long siege are giving up and yielding without a stroke. Even the thoughtless creatures in the army observe the hand of Providence in their rapid success. Bruges, Antwerp, and, in short, all Brabant and Flanders almost

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yielded ! What the French got in a night by stealth at the King of Spain's death they have lost again in a day. That old tyrant who wasted God's church is about to be wasted himself.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile French soldierly admiration of Marlborough rivalled their fears. Upon a nation so responsive to chivalry, valour, and prestige the genius of the English leader exercised an abnormal fascination. His courtesy to the captured nobles, his humanity to the wounded, the care he took about the well-being of the humbler prisoners, find testimony in all contemporary records. It was noted that he allowed no distinction between the treatment of the French and allied wounded. The Duke always showed the utmost attention to his prisoners. "Marlborough treated his prisoners of mark," writes Saint-Simon, "with an infinite politeness and set many of them at once at liberty for three months upon their parole."<sup>2</sup> He was most careful to shield the aristocracy of France from any reflection upon their courage. French historians of successive generations cherish and repeat his words of praise. They are probably not authentic, but this was the strain in which he spoke: of Villeroy's army, "With thirty thousand men as brave as that I could go to the end of the world"; of the Maison du Roi, "These were more than men, and I knew them so well that I was forced to set six men against each one of them."<sup>3</sup> Thus we see to what perfection he carried the art of conquest, and while inflicting the most terrible injuries made the vanquished grateful for his praise. Thus he anticipated the modern Japanese field orders which enjoin that the valour of the defeated enemy must always be praised. Thus he created the hold upon the French mind which lasted for generations after English contemporary politicians and writers had done their worst.

Marlborough cannot be robbed of the laurels of Ramillies. The Schellenberg, his detractors said, had been won by the Margrave. Blenheim was the conception and achievement

<sup>1</sup> A. Crichton, *The Life and Diary of Lieutenant-Colonel T. Blackadder* (1824), p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, iv, 427.

<sup>3</sup> Duclos, ii, 170.

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of Prince Eugene. But neither of these explanations covered the amazing event of May 23. Here the world saw Marlborough alone, without a council of war, achieving a military masterpiece seldom equalled and never surpassed. This was his victory and his alone. Ramillies belongs to that rare class of battles fought between equal forces of the highest quality wherein decisive success at comparatively small loss is gained through the manœuvres of a commander-in-chief. It will rank for ever with Rossbach and Austerlitz as an example of what a general can do with men.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

THE consequences of Ramillies rolled forward in every quarter. Louis XIV, responding to the event, stripped all other fronts to make head against Marlborough. The distresses and perils of Flanders dominated the enemy mind. The King of France was not incapable of taking the sweeping decisions required at intervals from the head of a mighty state assailed upon every side by a coalition. All his orders were obeyed. Indeed, if the French military power had not been so highly organized in the person of its ruler, France might have escaped the disaster which was to befall her in Italy. Marlborough, after all, was still only half-way through the fortress zone. More than twenty fortresses of the first order barred all the roads, rivers, and canals by which he could enter France. Every one of these would, if resolutely defended, count in the recognized schedule of weeks and days, of life, money, and gunpowder, before capture. The temporary dispersion of the French field army enabled them to receive ample garrisons. There is such a thing in war—it must be stated with all reserve—as over-precision of thought and action. Probably the King's best plan was to take his punishment among the fortresses with phlegm, and to finish the war in Italy by defeating the Imperial army under Prince Eugene and destroying the Duke of Savoy. A less highly sensitive organism or an even more comprehensive mind might have taken this chance.

But Louis XIV felt in his own bosom the shock of Ramillies, the overthrow of his household troops, the slaughter or capture of his intimate courtiers, the stigma of rout upon the armies of France. Thus he devoted every effort to rebuilding his Flanders army. He drained the Rhine and the Moselle of French troops. He resigned his successes

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July-  
October



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at Hagenau and on the Lauter, and all prospects of recapturing Landau. Here the Margrave, defeated, broken, and now dying in his half-finished palace and gardens at Rastadt, might remain unmolested at the head of the hungry, ragged, dispirited remnants of the Germanic armies. All the weight was taken off them. But in Italy, where final French victory was already in sight and where the allied cause seemed hopeless, an even greater submission to the battle was enforced. The whole flow of French reinforcements was stopped. Considerable forces were actually withdrawn, and Vendôme, who thought he had all the fruits of success in his hands, was ordered to the north. Thus did the victory of Ramillies prepare the rescue of Turin.

The effects upon the Allies were not less pronounced. Prussian loyalties returned to the allied cause, and the Prussian troops hitherto dawdling at Wesel had already marched to join Marlborough's army. All the German princes were heartened to make at least a renewed gesture of putting their shoulders to the wheel. But there were other less favourable reactions. The Court at Vienna was confirmed in their mood that all the Empire had to do was to lean heavily upon these marvellous Sea Powers, to be prompt in asserting its judicial rights to any conquests they might make, and as a prime endeavour stamp out the Hungarian revolt. In Holland the evil went much farther. The victory, the revolution in the Spanish Netherlands and their reversion to the Allies, created a new European situation which hinged directly upon Marlborough. The reconquered lands and cities were by every principle of the Grand Alliance a province of the monarchy of Charles III. That prince, now planning a march upon Madrid, had left behind him in Vienna, on the chance, however remote, that the French would be driven out of the Low Countries, a series of blank commissions for their government. These were in the hands of his brother, the Emperor, who since correspondence with Spain was slow and irregular had plenary powers to act in the general Hapsburg interest. Besides this, Count Goes, the Imperial Ambassador at The Hague, had lawful

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authority to take possession in the name of Charles III of any territory or fortresses that might be recovered. The major part had now suddenly fallen into the hands of Marlborough's army; and the Emperor and all his agents made haste to claim them.

On the other hand, the Dutch regarded Belgium as their longed-for Barrier, their indispensable dyke against France and Louis XIV. Here was their means of self-preservation, their prime objective of the war, as they saw it, in their grip. Moreover, Ramillies was to them above all a Dutch victory. Their native troops had borne the brunt. They had lost more blood than all the allied contingents together. It was the Dutch guards who had stormed Taviers against surprising odds. Dutch troopers had ridden down the *Maison du Roi*. The English had been but lightly engaged. The Prussians had stood aloof. The gallant Danes were the mercenaries jointly of the two Sea Powers. The Dutch acknowledged cordially that the battle had been won by the genius of an English Commander-in-Chief. But was he not also Deputy Captain-General of the Republic? Was he not their salaried officer? Had they not had the foresight to choose him and sustain him when the Queen of England would have set some ninny in his place? As the broadening tale of glory and of conquest flowed in to The Hague and Amsterdam, accompanied by lengthening lists of the Dutch killed and wounded, the States-General and every warlike element in Holland felt that the prize was theirs. There was, in fact, a renewal of the Limburg quarrel of 1703<sup>1</sup> between the Dutch and the Empire on a scale magnified many-fold alike by the wonderful gains of the battle and the bitter weariness of the unending war.

From the first moment when the Dutch realized what had happened they were very rough with Count Goes. He produced his patent of administration, dated the previous October in case the Netherlands should be regained. He formally notified the States-General and demanded a conference. His demand was refused. Three interests, he was told, must be

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, pp. 251, 252.

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satisfied : first, the practical interest of making the Estates of Brabant support the maximum number of troops ; secondly, the Dutch financial interest of collecting the Belgian revenue and distributing it later by agreement ; and, only thirdly, the Spanish interest, as the interest of King Charles III was described. This, it was intimated, would consist of formal homage to his sovereignty pending a general treaty of peace. Thus the Dutch claimed the substance, and in so far as they conceded the form conceded it only for their own convenience. Indeed, they needed to invoke the symbols of the Hapsburg claimant to the Spanish throne ; for it was to this alone that the Estates of Brabant had so suddenly sworn allegiance, and they knew well that no rule would be more disliked in Belgium than the rule of Holland. By the third week in June Hop, the Dutch Treasurer, was already there arranging the taxation. When Count Goes spoke of going to Brussels to protect the rights of Charles III he was warned in terms almost of menace not to inflame the Government of the Republic against his person.

In his distress Goes turned to Marlborough during the Duke's brief visit to The Hague. He reported the conversation to Vienna in his dispatch dated June 8.<sup>1</sup> The Duke said that he had found the secret Deputies of Holland so prejudiced against the Hapsburg claims that he had not felt able to assert them. Pending a general peace settlement, an interim military contribution must be agreed between the Estates of Brabant and Flanders and the Dutch authorities without reference to King Charles III. The Imperial Ambassador declared he would use his powers to the utmost against this. Marlborough, calmer than ever on the foam of success, counselled patience. "Wait," he said ; "I will concern myself with the interests of the King." "But what am I to report ?" asked Goes. "Write merely to the Emperor and the King of Spain," replied Marlborough, "that the Netherlands are for his Catholic Majesty ; that the

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough did not reach The Hague till the 9th ; so the Ambassador must have completed his dispatch on the 10th or 11th. See R. Geikie, *The Dutch Barrier, 1705-19*, p. 12.

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Queen claims nothing in them, nor any part of the Spanish monarchy; that besides there are some claims she will not suffer the Republic to raise. And," he continued, "this delay I am now demanding of you is only for the satisfaction of these people and for the great good of his Catholic Majesty himself, as I certainly imagine you could not in a dignified manner bring the Estates of Brabant and Flanders to do the things that will be asked of them, although those things are just, reasonable, and fair."

The Ambassador became more composed. He asked Marlborough whether he still agreed with the view that France must be reduced to the frontiers of the Pyrenees treaty. Marlborough answered, "You must discuss this question with the Pensionary. After the campaign is over I will myself make efforts to secure unity upon it. I have hopes of success, particularly [he threw in this point of reproach] *if peace should be made in Hungary. If this occurs I hope to engage the Republic in the reconquest of the whole Spanish Monarchy.*"<sup>1</sup>

This conversation reveals the simple, sober ruthlessness of Marlborough's political aims. The allied armies had now advanced to the point where many important conquests seemed open. The Dutch always suspected that the British would try to keep Ostend and Nieupoort for themselves, with all that followed them in trade and strategy. Marlborough, on the other hand, sought to overthrow the French domination of Europe by the sundering from France of the whole Spanish monarchy, of which the Hapsburgs were to be the custodians. He set an incidental value upon Dunkirk, that nest of privateers whose depredations were a curse to the revenue and a perpetual nuisance to Godolphin in Parliament; and he deemed it a substantial British interest that fortified harbours like Dunkirk, Rochefort, and Toulon should be permanently demilitarized. But, apart from this, England must covet nothing on the continent of Europe. Her reward would be in the success of the causes for which she fought, which would open the future to her in a manner not to be

<sup>1</sup> Goes' dispatch, June 8. The original French is in Klopp, xli, 87 n. Goes added, "These are his own words."

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measured by territorial gains. "I see by yours," he wrote to Godolphin (June 21), "that you do not expect any great advantages for England, when the treaty of peace is once begun. I ask your pardon on being of another opinion, for I think you may expect everything that is for the safety and good of England. I do not mean by that any places in this country, for I am persuaded that it is much more for her Majesty's service and England not to be master of any towns in this country, since it would create a jealousy both at home and abroad. I know this should not be the language of a general, but I do it as a faithful subject."<sup>1</sup> It was also the language of a statesman.

It was natural, and soon became obvious, that the completeness of their local victory would make the Dutch more ready for peace and better able to obtain it. They were the vital factor in the English policy to break irretrievably the power of France, which Marlborough animated and executed, and at the same time they were the power most susceptible to proposals to start separate peace negotiations. While French armies contended on the frontiers, French diplomacy was at work in all the capitals. We have seen how narrowly they had failed at Berlin. But it was at The Hague that Louis XIV and his advisers always felt their best chance lay. The Dutch fought against misfortune with unconquerable stubbornness and vigour. But in success they fought only for their definite, limited purpose. All this extension of the war to Bavaria, Spain, and Italy, and across the oceans, they regarded as markedly subordinate to their clear-cut, practical aim—the Dyke, the Barrier, behind which lay their safety, freedom, Protestantism, and trade.

Far gone were the days of 1702, when their army crouched under the ramparts of Nimwegen, and when this new English commander, whom, to bind the English to their cause and keep out more overweening servants, they had made their Deputy Captain-General, had invited them to take the offensive, sword in hand. The Meuse was clear to the gates of Namur. The whole course of the Rhine, and all its strong-

<sup>1</sup> Cox, ii, 377.

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holds, were in allied hands. Brussels had fallen. Antwerp, the greatest prize of all, for which the utmost sacrifices might well have been made, had surrendered without a siege. Bruges, Ghent, Oudenarde, Ostend, even Tournai and Mons, were already theirs or were within their grasp, and Nieuport, Ypres, Menin, Ath, might well be gained. Behind these bristled the fortresses of the French frontier—Dunkirk, Aire, Saint-Venant, Lille, Valenciennes, Douai, Bouchain, Maubeuge, and Philippeville. But were these trophies essential to the preservation of the Republic? They wanted to humble the power of France. Surely it was humbled already. Were not the great King's envoys busy through half a dozen channels with proposals for a separate peace, based primarily and without question upon a good Barrier for Holland? And what of England? Her schemes ranged far. While with one hand she animated and led the armies of Europe to the invasion of France, with the other she calmly took possession of trade, of the oceans, and of the fabulous regions that lay beyond. How far should Dutchmen be drawn by this island incantation? If Marlborough wielded a glorious sword, did he not also wave a magician's wand? They might be grateful; they must not be bewitched.

The majestic events of history and the homely incidents of daily life alike show how vainly man strives to control his fate. Even his greatest neglects or failures may bring him good. Even his greatest achievements may work him ill. If Marlborough had merely won the battle of Ramillies, taken Louvain, and perhaps entered Brussels, the campaign of 1706 might have carried the allied cause to victory in 1707. But he now began to experience a whole series of new resistances and withholdings from the Dutch, as well as their grabbings and graspings, all of which were destined to bring the fortunes of the Allies once again to the lowest ebb.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

July 14, 1706

Now that the siege of Ostend is over, I was in hopes we might have lost no time in attacking Menin; but M. Geldermalsen

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sends me word that they have not the necessary preparations ready. But as soon as they come to Ghent he will let me know it. I am afraid we shall find at last that some of our friends are of opinion that we have *already done too much*; <sup>1</sup> for notwithstanding what I said when I was at Ostend, that two regiments would be enough to leave in that place, they have left six. But I have written to The Hague, and if they do not give orders that some of them be sent to the army they do not intend to have much more done this year. This will appear strange to you, but we have so many of these refined politics that it is high time we had a good peace. At the same time that I say this to you, the greatest part of the people are very honest, and wish well to the common cause; but those that are of the contrary faction are more active and diligent. Everything goes so well in Spain that if we have success with the descent France must submit to a reasonable peace.<sup>2</sup>

“It is amazing,” wrote Godolphin at this time,

that after so much done for their advantage, and even for their safety, the States can have been capable of such a behaviour. Those of the French faction must have seen their advantage upon this occasion, to fill them with jealousy of your having, and consequently of England’s having, too much power; and if this be at the bottom we shall soon see that argument made use of on other occasions, as well as this. But your prudence and good temper will get the better, I hope, of all this folly and perverseness.<sup>3</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

HELCHIN

July 15, 1706

I find we must not expect all our cannon till the end of this month; but on the 22d. I think to invest Menin, and employ the first six or seven days in covering some of the quarters; for we cannot spare above thirty-two battalions for the siege. There will remain with me seventy-two, which I hope will be a sufficient strength to oppose whatever they can bring, though the Elector of Bavaria says he is promised 110 battalions. They have certainly more horse than we; but if they had greater

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough’s italics.

<sup>2</sup> Coxne, iii, 57, 58.

<sup>3</sup> July 15; *ibid.*, 394.

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numbers I neither think it their interest nor their inclinations to venture a battle ; for *our men are in heart, and theirs are cowed*.<sup>1</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

HELCHIN

July 19, 1706

I think I have convinced the States-General that their resolution of the 19th of last month, in which they reserved to themselves the signing all the powers, and consequently governing this country in their names, was excluding her Majesty and England from being able to perform to these people, what I promised in her Majesty's name, which, if they had persisted, must have produced a very ill effect ; *for the great towns depend [count] much more upon the Queen's protection than upon that of the States*.<sup>2</sup>

These hindrances continued throughout the campaign. "It is publicly said at The Hague," wrote Marlborough to Godolphin (August 30),

that France is reduced to what it ought to be, and that if the war should be carried farther, it would serve only to make England greater than it ought to be. In short, I am afraid our best Allies are very fond of a peace, and that they would engage England to quarrel with the emperor, to have a pretext to come at a peace.<sup>3</sup>

And again (September 20):

The success with which it has pleased God to bless the arms of the Allies this campaign has made them [the Dutch] very jealous of the great power, as they term it, that England has in the greatest part of the courts in Christendom. It is certain that the Dutch carry everything with so high a hand that they are not beloved anywhere.<sup>4</sup>

In those days, when to our minds news travelled slowly, grave decisions of State were often taken with promptitude, few having to be consulted. In the middle of June the Emperor filled in and signed one of the blank commissions which his brother sovereign had confided to him. He appointed the Duke of Marlborough Viceroy of the Netherlands. In the instructions to Goes the Court of Vienna gave

<sup>1</sup> Coxé, *ii*, 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *ii*, 400.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *iii*, 56, 57

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.



## MARLBOROUGH

their reasons. Marlborough would be acceptable to the Belgians. His appointment would bind the English more closely to the interests of the Empire. His prestige both in England and Holland would alone preserve the Netherlands intact for Charles III. He controlled "the heart of the war," and would, they thought, also control the peace negotiations. On its merits this was a fine stroke of policy. It offered far the most agreeable arrangement to the Belgians, and safeguarded in the highest degree possible Hapsburg interests. Who else but Marlborough had a chance of persuading the Dutch? The courier bearing this important news reached Marlborough's headquarters on June 28. The proposal confronted him with one of the testing decisions of his life. It was no doubt the best military and political arrangement conceivable. Combining the command of the army with a virtual sovereignty in the theatre of war, his control would for the first time be perfect. It would, if adopted, adjourn the pending question within the Alliance till peace was gained. It invested him with almost royal status, and offered him a revenue of sixty thousand pounds a year.

From every point of view, personal and public, British and European, it met all needs. There is no doubt that Marlborough greatly desired to accept it. Goslinga insinuates that he had himself applied for the post to Charles III. He suggests that Count Lecheraine, who was in almost continuous movement between Düsseldorf, Barcelona, and Vienna, had borne the request from the victorious Duke to the struggling King of Spain. There is not the slightest evidence that Marlborough made any such request to Charles III. There is no question but that the offer originated spontaneously in Vienna, and a mere comparison of dates and distances shows that it was utterly impossible for Charles III at Barcelona to have corresponded with his brother in the time. But even if it were true that Marlborough had asked the King for the appointment it would only make his conduct on receiving the offer from the Emperor more to be respected. Nothing in his whole career shows in more striking fashion how far he could rise on great

## THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

occasions above all those private advantages which in the ordinary swing of life he counted so carefully. Here was the greatest prize ever within his reach. Moreover, it was the best arrangement. Let us see how it weighed with him in comparison with what was now already a hackneyed phrase, but none the less to him a grand reality—the common cause.

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

June 28, 1706

I received last night an express from Vienna, with the enclosed letter, in Latin, from the Emperor. I shall keep it here a secret, till I know from you what her Majesty's pleasure is, as also I shall take measures with my friends in Holland to know how they will like it; *for I must take care that they take no jealousy, whatever the Queen's resolution may be.* I beg no notice may be taken till the Emperor's Minister shall apply to her Majesty. I beg you to assure the Queen that I have in this matter, nor never shall have in any other, any desire of my own, but with all the submission in the world be pleased with what she shall think is for her interest.<sup>1</sup>

It happened that the Dutch Treasurer was in his camp at Rousselaer almost immediately after the Emperor's letter had been received. The Duke laid it before him. Hop said at once that it would raise ill-humour in Holland. The States-General would say that the Emperor wished to make use of Marlborough and the Queen of England to keep the wealth of Belgium out of the hands of the Dutch. This only confirmed Marlborough's own opinion. He saw that his acceptance of this great and lucrative office might deeply injure the Allies. If that were so he would have none of it.

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

ROUSSELAER

July 1, 1706

M. Hop is come this day from Brussels, and I have communicated to him the Emperor's letter, and the powers from the King of Spain. He made me great compliments, but I find by him that he thinks this may give uneasiness in Holland, by

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, ii, 388.

## MARLBOROUGH

thinking that the Court of Vienna has a mind to put the power of this country into the Queen's hands, in order that they may have nothing to do with it. If I should find the same thing by the Pensioner, and that nothing can cure this jealousy but my desiring to be excused from accepting this commission, I hope the Queen will allow of it; for the advantage and honour I might have by this commission is very insignificant in comparison of the fatal consequences that might be, if it should cause a jealousy between the two nations.<sup>1</sup>

Every one consulted in England was delighted. Not only Godolphin but the Whig leaders, Somers and Sunderland, whom he apprised, accepted the proposal cordially. England would have Belgium in her hands. What could be better, whether for the war or for the peace? The Queen, still under the impression of Ramillies, was entirely content that Mr Freeman should have this great honour which he had won with his sword. She was glad when her Ministers moved her to authorize him to decide the matter as he thought fit.

Meanwhile Count Goes brought the dispatches he had received from the Emperor to the notice of the Dutch authorities. Certainly Goes, smarting under his rough usage from the Dutch, took the worst way. Instead of submitting the documents to the Pensionary in due routine, he handed them, as we may suppose with some air of triumph, to the President of the States-General for the week. The letters of the Emperor were read out to the Assembly. There was general astonishment. The Pensionary, assailed by a storm of questions, was completely unprepared. The Dutch view was overwhelmingly expressed that the Emperor had no right to dispose of the government of Belgium without previous consultation with the Republic, whose Barrier it must be. Pensionary Heinsius quitted the stormy meeting, indignant at having been thus inconsiderately exposed. He fell upon Count Goes, and reproached him vehemently with not having warned him beforehand. "He was more beside himself," reported Goes, "than I have ever seen him, though I have had frequent opportunities of observing him."<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, ii, 392.

<sup>2</sup> Klopp, xii, 93.

## THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

Ambassador then quoted the terms of Marlborough's letter; but this merely asked him "to inform Messieurs les États," and certainly had never prescribed the omission of Heinsius, or any departure from the usual custom. Heinsius addressed himself by letter to Marlborough. He complained of the proposal; he complained of the procedure. Marlborough replied in terms of the utmost goodwill. He would on no account allow any question of his personal interest to impair the unity of the Alliance. Never was disinterested renunciation more forthcoming or more complete. But his own letters had better be read.

*Marlborough to Heinsius*

ROUSSELAER

July 3, 1706

. . . I shall take no step in this matter, but what shall be by the advice of the States; for I prefer infinitely their friendship before any particular interest to myself; for I thank God and the Queen I have no need nor desire of being richer, but have a very great ambition of doing everything that can be for the public good; and as for the frontier, which is absolutely necessary for your security, you know my opinion of it. In short, I beg you to assure yourself, and everybody else, that I shall with pleasure behave myself in this matter, and all things else, that you may think for the good of the republic, as you would have me; for next to serving the Queen and my country I have nothing more at heart than to have your good opinions. And let me on this occasion assure the States that I serve them with the same affection and zeal that I do my own country, so that they need be under no difficulty; for if they think it for their service I shall with pleasure excuse myself from accepting this commission.<sup>1</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

HARLEBECK

July 6, 1706

The enclosed letter [from the Pensioner] of the same date confirms me that if I should accept the honour the Emperor and the King of Spain do me, it would create a great jealousy, which might prejudice the common cause, so that I hope her Majesty will approve of what I have done. And I beg you to be so just and kind to me as to assure the Queen that, though the appointments

<sup>1</sup> Cox, ii, 392.

## MARLBOROUGH

of this Government are threescore thousand pounds a year, I shall with pleasure excuse myself, since I am convinced it is for her service, unless the States should make it their request, which they are very far from doing; for they have told me that they think it not reasonable that the King of Spain should have possession of the Low Countries till they had assurances of what barrier they should have for their security. I hope this compliance of mine will give me so much credit as to be able to hinder them from hurting themselves; for it is certain, if they follow their own inclinations, they will make such demands upon this country as will very much dissatisfy the house of Austria, and be thought unreasonable by all the Allies, of which the French would be sure to make their advantage.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough hoped that his renunciation of great advantages would give him all the more influence in inducing the Dutch to abate their own ambitions. In a formal letter to Heinsius, after repeating his refusal of the Emperor's offer, he opened this argument.

### *Marlborough to Heinsius*

CAMP OF HARLEBECK

July 10, 1706

. . . On this occasion I take the liberty of reminding their High Mightinesses that when the army came to Louvain, and in the farther progress which we have made with the advice of the army Deputies, we jointly gave assurances, in writing, to all the towns and people of the country, in the name of the Queen, of their High Mightinesses, and of his Catholic Majesty, that those should regain the same rights, privileges, and advantages which they enjoyed in the time of King Charles the Second; and to these assurances, with the help of God, I am persuaded we must partly attribute the facility with which we entered into possession of so many strong places, where every one testified universal joy. . . .

However, according to what I have learned, or have been able to comprehend hitherto, it has always appeared that the States had nothing else in view but a good barrier, and a reasonable security for their country. I beg, then, you will, with all submission to their High Mightinesses, entreat them to reflect

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, II, 393.

## THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

maturely on such a step, which is perhaps not the true means of attaining those objects. . . .<sup>1</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

HELCHIN

July 12, 1706

By my last letter, which I sent by way of Ostend, you will see the measures that the Dutch are desirous to take concerning the management of this country, *which would certainly set this whole country against them* ; so that I hope you will find some way of not letting them play the fool. You know that I am always very ready to speak freely to them, when I think it for their service. But in this matter I am not at liberty, fearing they might mistake me, and think it might proceed from self-interest. I am sure, in this matter, I have with pleasure sacrificed my own interest, in order to make them reasonable, which I hope will be approved by my friends ; for should I have acted otherwise, the party that is for peace would have made a very ill use of it. For the favourers of the French faction endeavour all they can to persuade the people in Holland that the King of Spain will be governed by the Queen, and that this success will all turn to the advantage of England, so that they must not rely upon anybody, but secure their frontier now that they have it in their power. This is so plausible in Holland that I am afraid the honest people, though they see the dangerous consequences this must have, yet dare not speak against it ; *and I can assure you these great towns had rather be under any nation than the Dutch.*<sup>2</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

HARLEBECK

July 14, 1706

You will see by three or four letters that I have lately writ to you the care I have taken not to give any occasion of jealousy in Holland, and that I was in hopes that my declining the honour the King of Spain had done me would give me so much power with the States as that I might be able to hinder them from doing themselves and the common cause hurt. But such is their temper that when they have misfortunes they are desirous of peace upon any terms, and when we are blessed by God with success they are for turning it to their own advantage, without any consideration how it may be liked by their friends and

<sup>1</sup> COXE, ii, 395.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

## MARLBOROUGH

allies . . . <sup>1</sup> I dread the consequences of this matter, for I cannot write so freely to the States as I should otherwise, if I were not personally concerned. You may be sure the French have too many partisans in Holland, not to be informed of this proceeding, so that they will be sure to make their advantage of it.<sup>2</sup>

Thus we see this man, described by so many historians as the most self-seeking and avaricious of his generation, rejecting without apparent mental hesitation a personal advantage of the greatest magnitude. It came to him as the fruit of his victory. He longed to have it. The Emperor wished it. The English Government warmly approved. The plan was good in itself. There was no obstacle but the Dutch. But if the Dutch disagreed, if the structure of the Alliance were thereby endangered, Marlborough was ready at once to discard the whole scheme.

He was also ready to make another personal sacrifice. His intense military exertions after Ramillies were accompanied by a remarkable diplomatic intrigue equally designed to exploit the victory. We have seen the elaborate procedure which Marlborough had observed towards Max Emmanuel about his boar-hunting proclivities in the autumn of 1705. While he could not meet his wishes, he sought by every means to establish a personal and friendly contact with the Prince who seemed marked on every occasion to be the nearest victim of his sword. On the morrow of Ramillies came a new occasion. A Dutch courier had been captured by the Elector's cavalry with letters from the field Deputies to Marlborough. The Elector was at pains to forward the letters unopened to Marlborough with studied compliments. Marlborough replied from Nivelles on June 4, 1706 :

I render a thousand most humble thanks to your Electoral Highness for the kindness of sending my letters captured near Antwerp. I wish with all my heart that some occasion may offer to prove my most respectful gratitude. I beg your Highness to be assured that I should seize it with extreme pleasure. . . .<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some words omitted in the original.

<sup>3</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 562.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, ii, 398.

## THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

Hot-foot amid the marches of the army, and the surprising fall of fortresses, Marlborough appointed an agent, one Sersanders, a distinguished Belgian functionary, to visit the Elector. There was a secret interview at Mons on August 3. Sersanders urged Max Emmanuel to desert the cause of France. He cited the example of the Duke of Savoy. In Marlborough's name he offered the fugitive Elector the full restoration of his hereditary Bavarian lands. He held out the hopes that these might be stretched across the Brenner Pass to include the Milanese. Lastly, to clinch the matter and to prove Marlborough's sincerity, Sersanders was authorized to throw in the principality of Mindelheim which Marlborough had gained at Blenheim and by laborious negotiations with the Emperor. It was the trophy which had most tempted his vanity. But now in a larger grouping of ideas it might play a different part. Sersanders in Marlborough's name offered the Elector "all his Bavarian estates without any exception, not even that of the principality of Mindelheim."<sup>1</sup>

It will now be seen how important it had been for Marlborough to learn d'Alègre's terms of the previous year. Those that he now outlined were their complete reverse. Max Emmanuel, instead of being forced to exchange Bavaria for an Italian kingdom, was to be restored to Munich, Ulm, the Danube, Donauwörth, Ingolstadt, and his own people. More than that, he might aspire to the Milanese, which he had tried vainly to invade before Blenheim. All the original ambitions which had induced this prince so traitorously to abandon the Empire were to be achieved at the price of a counter-desertion. If ever there was a bribe it was here. But one item remained: the four key-fortresses which Marlborough could not see his way to conquer within the limits of the campaign—namely, Namur, Mons, Charleroi, and Luxembourg—at this moment garrisoned by the Elector's troops, were to be surrendered to the armies of the Sea Powers.

Max Emmanuel, at first staggered, was captivated by this plan. We have seen the long suspicion with which he had

<sup>1</sup> French Foreign Office Archives, "Bavière," tome 56, f. 161.



## MARLBOROUGH

been regarded by the French Court. To no one did the Great King in chivalrous honour owe a greater service than to this luckless, hunted exile, who had sullied and ruined himself for his faith in the arms of France. Of no one was the King less sure. He saw the temptation and he knew the man. What followed casts a cold light upon the temper of Versailles. It happened that the French also had a secret agent in the Elector's camp. Rouillé, a former ambassador of France and President of the Parliament of Paris, was at Mons when Sersanders arrived. The Elector did not conceal from him the proposals he had received. Rouillé reported the whole matter to Versailles. The campaign was in full swing. The tide of Marlborough's conquests was at its height. Here were the four vital fortresses, by which alone the soil of France could be defended, about to be betrayed. The counsellors who gathered around Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon, and the princes of the blood so far as they were informed, were neither shocked nor indignant. They faced the reality. They at once sought to broaden the negotiations. Vendôme, as well as Rouillé, was in the camp. Together they framed the counter-proposals of a general peace and sent them through Sersanders to Marlborough.<sup>1</sup>

These proposals mark a shrinkage of French claims induced by the military situation. Not only the Spanish monarchy, but Spain itself, was to be partitioned between Philip V and Charles III. The choice of which part each should have was offered to the Allies, provided that, whatever happened, Philip V had the province of Guipúzcoa and Charles III the sovereignty of the Spanish Netherlands. As for Max Emmanuel, not only would he be restored to Bavaria with some additions at German expense, but he for his life and his son after him should be entrusted with the government of the Netherlands, as a vassal or servant of Charles III, with whom he was at the moment at war, and of whose house he had long been a deadly foe.

It is not difficult to see how this fantastic plan struck

<sup>1</sup> French Foreign Office Archives, "Baviere," tome 56, f. 213.



CHARLES MONTAGU, EARL OF HALIFAX  
Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*National Portrait Gallery*



## THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

Marlborough. The partition of Spain would have been violently rejected in England. The proposal about the Viceroyalty of Belgium was inherently absurd, and finally closed any prospect which might still remain to Marlborough. Above all, he was not to have the four fortresses. This supreme immediate military objective was at all costs denied him. He therefore ruptured the negotiations. He left the French counter-proposals unanswered. He bent again to his sieges. The French, taking no avoidable risks, replaced all Max Emmanuel's Spanish garrisons with their own troops, and the campaign was ended only by the winter.

During the autumn both the Anglo-Dutch bargainings about the Barrier and the Succession Treaty and the French overtures for peace continued fitfully. Early in October the Dutch "preliminaries" after long debates with Halifax were drawn up and dispatched to England. They included the whole of the Spanish Empire for the Hapsburgs except for an extensive Dutch barrier. Godolphin approved the Dutch "preliminaries" as they stood; and Marlborough was able on November 19 to inform the Elector of Bavaria, with whom he still remained in contact, that Queen Anne was willing to enter into peace negotiations with Louis XIV. It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that the Barrier-Succession Treaty was so far settled between the Sea Powers as to make it possible for them to address the French unitedly upon a general peace at this time. The inter-allied negotiations never, in fact, got far enough for any formal discussion with the other side. The draft terms which the Allies were arranging with each other were incomparably more severe than anything France was at that time prepared to concede. Marlborough, no longer attracted by the four fortresses and by the hopes of detaching Max Emmanuel from France, was now implacably adverse. "You must give me leave," he wrote to Slingelandt, Overkirk's future successor in command of the Dutch (October 10, 1706), "to tell you that I am one of those who believe that France is not yet reduced to her just bounds, and that nothing can

## MARLBOROUGH

be more hurtful to us on this occasion than seeming over-forward to clap up a hasty peace.”<sup>1</sup> The English refusal of the Dutch demand for Ostend as a “barrier-fortress” caused another deadlock. The Sea Powers found themselves unable to agree with one another upon the foundations, and never even reached a point at which they could try to come to an agreement with the enemy. As soon as the French Government realized that there was no chance of dividing the Maritime Powers they in their turn abandoned all hope of fruitful negotiation in 1706.

Fate with sardonic smile ordained that the most brilliant victory gained by Marlborough for the Dutch Republic should raise new hindrances to his action in their name; and that his most generous of personal sacrifices should leave behind it in Dutch hearts only embarrassing suspicions. From the day on which the Emperor offered him the Vice-royalty of the Netherlands a sense of divergent interest arose inevitably and irresistibly between the Dutch leaders and their Deputy Captain-General. Henceforward, whatever Marlborough might declare, they could not help believing, first, that he owed them a grudge for having been the obstacle, and, secondly, that he still hoped to obtain the prize. Henceforth they must regard him as an interested supporter of Hapsburg and Imperial claims rather than of their own. It is no reproach to Marlborough that persisting elements of truth underlay the Dutch misgivings. His conduct had been spontaneous, high-minded, and scrupulously correct. He bore no grudges; he pursued no conscious designs. But of course he was gratified by the offers of the Emperor and of Charles III, and hoped, indeed, that a day might come when without prejudice to the common cause he might accept and enjoy them. How far in the deep springs of human action this fact influenced his policy and counsel no one can measure; but certainly in every negotiation about the Barrier, in every overture for peace with France—nay, almost in every march of the Confederate army—Dutch opinion sought to trace a prevailing and personal motive; and from this cause his

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 165-166.

## THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

influence throughout Holland suffered a partial but none the less profound and incurable decline.

Ramillies, with its prelude and its sequel, was the most glorious episode in Marlborough's life. Whether as the victorious commander, the sagacious Minister, or the disinterested servant of the allied cause, his personal conduct was noble. Before the battle he had sacrificed as he believed his prospects of a fine campaign in the Low Countries for the sake of the armies in other theatres, and especially for Prince Eugene. He had gained a great battle by consummate art. He had used the military pursuit and the political consequences to such deadly profit as to drive the French out of the Netherlands. After the victory he had handsomely renounced his own interests in order to preserve the harmony of the Alliance. To procure from Max Emmanuel the four French key-fortresses he had not hesitated to throw his own principality of Mindelheim into the scale. How vain are those writers in so many lands who suppose that the great minds of the world in their supreme activities are twisted or swayed by sordid or even personal aims. These, indeed, may clog their footsteps along the miry road of life ; but soaring on the wings of victory all fall away. It is Marlborough's true glory that the higher his fortune, the higher rose his virtue. We must at a later stage present the reader with some contrasts, and show how Marlborough's conduct contracted with his power. But in 1706 he shines as genius and hero, wise, valiant, and stainless, striving only for the best for England and the best for all.

## CHAPTER IX

### MADRID AND TURIN

1706,  
May-  
Septem-  
ber

THE relief of Barcelona, the quitting of Spanish soil by Philip V, the effective possession by the Allies of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia, and the fact that there was no longer any force to oppose an invasion from Portugal—all in combination offered to Charles III his fairest opportunity in Spain. The need for an immediate march on Madrid from all sides—Galway from Portugal, Peterborough from Valencia, and above all the King himself from Catalonia—blazed before every eye.<sup>1</sup> In congratulating Peterborough upon his relief of the city Marlborough pointed out in his most persuasive manner the next step :

#### *Marlborough to Peterborough*

I have no doubt that your Lordship has already escorted the King to Madrid, and take this opportunity to felicitate you on this glorious exploit, which is everywhere attributed to your valour and conduct. All the Allies exult in the advantages which are likely to result from this splendid success, and I particularly rejoice in the new lustre which it will shed on your glory. After such astonishing actions there is nothing which we may not expect from you ; so that I flatter myself you will not consider our hopes as ill-founded if we reckon upon the speedy reduction of Spain to the obedience of its legitimate sovereign, since it seems as if Providence had chosen you to be the happy instrument. I heartily wish you all success till you have completed the great work.<sup>2</sup>

These brilliant prospects were swiftly wrecked by personal jealousies. To escape from Peterborough's malicious control King Charles III, with the troops from Barcelona, first delayed on petty pretexts, and eventually made a long, needless

<sup>1</sup> See map at p. 175 ; also general map of Spain facing p. 356.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, ii, 374.

## MADRID AND TURIN

circuit through Aragon. Peterborough, obsessed by his feud with "the Vienna crew," left all his forces dispersed throughout Valencia, and when eventually imperative orders forced him to march to a junction with King Charles, he set out with only a few hundred dragoons. Galway, with the main army, nearly nineteen thousand strong—chiefly Portuguese—had, as soon as Tessé withdrew, advanced into Spain from the west. The Portuguese commander, Das Minas, preferred sieges and pillage to marches or battle. Precious time was lost in the capture of Alcantara and Ciudad Rodrigo; but Marshal Berwick, sent in haste to the scene from the Cevennes, and outnumbered two to one, could at first do no more than observe, and fall back before, the invaders. The sloth of Das Minas so angered Galway and his English officers that extreme measures were used with King Peter. Methuen, the ambassador, told him plainly that, unless the Portuguese forces marched forthwith upon Madrid, all the British and allied troops would be withdrawn from Portugal, carried round by sea, and thrust in from the opposite side of the Peninsula.

It may be that this was the best plan. The main advance would have been through friendly regions, leaving Castilian pride unaffronted by the sight of hereditary Portuguese foes. However, King Peter, who was failing fast, submitted to the threat. Imperative orders were sent to Das Minas, and Galway plodded steadfastly forward upon his long, remarkable march. Berwick, with less than eight thousand men, retreated before him to Madrid. Here he was joined by Philip V and reinforcements from Valencia which raised his army to fourteen thousand men. By the end of June he was equal in numbers and superior in quality to Galway, whose strength had wasted during his advance. Berwick, with his cool, adept professionalism, rejected the temptation of fighting a battle for the capital. He had also to consider Charles III approaching from Aragon, and Peterborough, who, for all he knew, might bring nearly six thousand English from Valencia. He therefore abandoned Madrid, and, accompanied by Philip, retired to Burgos. On June 27 Galway entered



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Madrid, and proclaimed Charles III King of all Spain and the Indies. But the capital was deserted, and its Hapsburg monarch still tarried at Barcelona.

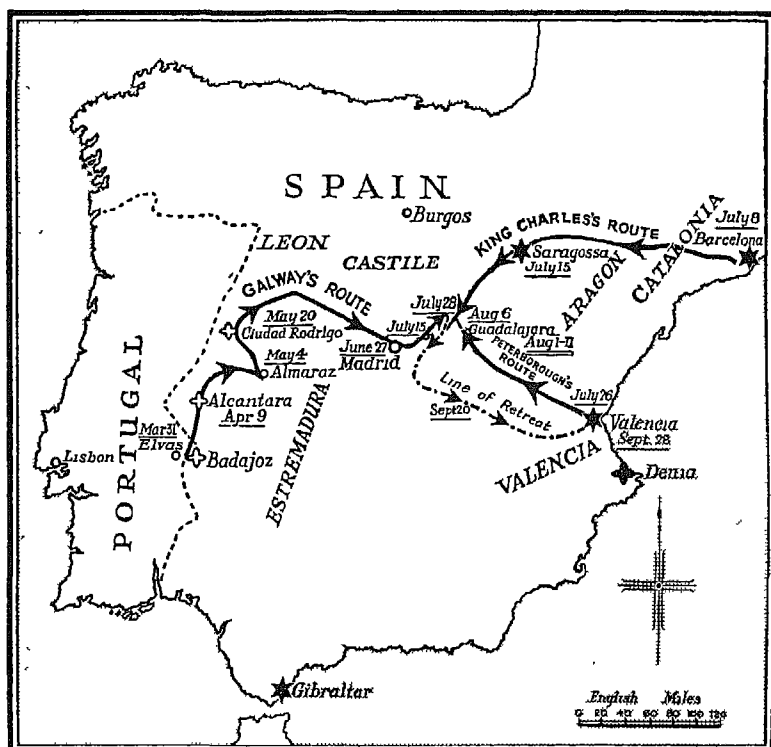
At Burgos Berwick was joined by almost all the Castilian nobility. At the same time the population of the two Castiles, of Leon and Estremadura, rose against the insult of a Portuguese invasion. In every town and village of western and central Spain levies and guerrilla bands sprang to arms. All Galway's communications with Portugal were obliterated by a veritable tide of popular uprising. By the middle of July General Légal from France joined Berwick with eleven thousand men. Although the gathering of the fruits might be delayed, the Marshal was henceforward master of the situation. Once again the fortunes of this sporadic war had been reversed. Galway could do no more than wait for a while in or near Madrid imploring King Charles and Peterborough to join him. The three leaders eventually met on August 6 at Guadalajara, thirty-five miles north-east of Madrid. But where were their armies? The King had barely five thousand men, instead of eight thousand expected. Peterborough arrived with a paltry four hundred horse, and Galway's own army after garrisoning Madrid was reduced to little more than ten thousand. The rejoicings of a friendly population, the assemblage of so many notable personages, could not veil the fact that the great opportunity was already lost. If further proof were needed it was to be speedily supplied. On the very day of the allied junction at Guadalajara a detachment from Berwick's army re-entered Madrid.

The allied commanders for a while nursed the belief that united they were stronger than Berwick. Gradually it became apparent that he had twenty-five thousand men, while they had but fifteen thousand. Unless the Allies were anxious for battle at these odds, there was no choice but retreat, and in the only direction open. To Valencia therefore the leaders made their way; and Charles and his Court wintered there. It seems strange that Berwick did not force a battle or at least pursue with vigour. Doubtless he had soldierly reasons. Perhaps the shadow of Ramillies falling upon this minor

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theatre forbade the hazard of the only success gained by France in 1706.

Peterborough did not share the asperities of the retreat. He saw with selfish intuition that the sunshine days in Spain were gone. Characteristically he had thrown the



THE CAPTURE OF MADRID

blame on Charles for the delayed junction of the allied forces. To Sarah he had given the following version :

Your Grace . . . will wonder when I tell you that we cannot prevail with the King of Spain to go thither [to Madrid] : and his wise Ministers have thought fit to defer it from the time it was possible at least two months, if some accident do not prevent it for ever. . . .

. . . Your Grace has not been without some great mortifications

## MARLBOROUGH

of this kind, when want of power has prevented the amazing success which always attended the Duke of Marlborough when at liberty ; but mine of this kind are eternal, and no history ever produced such an everlasting struggle of Ministers against the interest of their master.<sup>1</sup>

Upon his arrival at Guadalajara he proposed to the council of war that he should go on a mission to the Duke of Savoy. Some echo of authority for this was derived from his original instructions. Time and events had made these instructions so obsolete that Godolphin describes his use of them as a "pretension." Indeed, the Treasurer, who was shrewdly informed, had other suspicions. "I don't find," he wrote to Marlborough (September 30/October 11),

he [Colonel Hamilton : a messenger] can give any other account of my Lord's journey to the Duke of Savoy than to get some dismounted German troopers, and to carry them back to Spain and mount them. This seems so slight an occasion for a general that I cannot help thinking it might be worth your pains to engage Count Maffei *to let you know what he says to the Duke of Savoy ; for my opinion is, it fully deserves your curiosity.*<sup>2</sup>

If the careful Lord Treasurer had also known the moneys which Peterborough was to borrow for the public from the Jews of Genoa and their rate of interest, he would have felt that his own attention should also be engaged.

Peterborough's proposal to quit the Headquarters was received with such ill-concealed feelings of joy from all his colleagues that the matter was decided in a single day. "The whole council," wrote Godolphin, "agreed to it, by which we may conclude they were as well content to be rid of him as he was to go."<sup>3</sup> We need not follow the romantic and dangerous adventures of Peterborough's journey. How he was robbed by brigands of his enormous baggage, with its abundance of delicate provisions ; how he gave the law to the towns through which he passed ; how he beguiled the path of duty with the exploits of gallantry ; how he sailed on a frigate commanded by his second son, who fought a stiff

<sup>1</sup> *Sarah Correspondence*, i, 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> *Coxe*, iii, 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*

## MADRID AND TURIN

action with a French squadron; and how he eventually reached Genoa and the Duke of Savoy, are not necessary to our tale.

We may now observe the repercussion of these events as after long delays they reached Whitehall and the allied Headquarters in Flanders. Marlborough learned through many channels of the evil turn in Spain. All the quarrelling chiefs laid their cases before him. At first he seemed to accept Peterborough's versions, and certainly Peterborough sought by every means to hold his approval.

### *Peterborough to Marlborough*

BARCELONA

May 13, 1706

\* You cannot imagine, my Lord, how much the dependence on your protection has given me heart in the great difficulties, and I flatter myself so far as to think that I assure myself the continuance of your friendship, which I value at a high rate, and shall endeavour to preserve by all means in my power.<sup>1</sup>

May 26, 1706

\* Our successes must plead for the extraordinary expenses the Queen is put to, which are such as I hope will soon make us amends, unless some fatality attends the Portuguese army [*i.e.*, Galway's invasion], which in all human probability should determine the fate of Spain in a short time. The last news we had gave account they were at Almenara, within a few miles of Madrid. . . . Notwithstanding the extraordinary delays which upon all occasions we may hear, I embark aboard the Fleet to-morrow with 3000 foot . . . and I think the King will follow, though our great Prince of Lichtenstein is somewhat surprised that he is not furnished with 100,000 pistoles for the King's equipage, and I think he is equally angry with England as Catalonia with Mr Stanhope and me. . . . About £50,000 came in the ships from Italy . . . but being brought to Barcelona it has only been applied to orders of the King and the uses of the siege.<sup>2</sup>

27 June, 1706

\* . . . As to what relates to Spain, I am a stranger and a heretic, yet I have the power of a dictator, of a tyrant; when the

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS. Extract.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## MARLBOROUGH

King is absent, in truth I do all; but the King himself is made use of to obstruct me upon almost all occasions, and it may easily be conceived how I am with his Ministers, whose avarice I cannot satisfy and whose blunders I am obliged to obstruct, being condemned to contradict them in almost everything or suffer all to come to ruin.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough was already well informed of the state of Peterborough's relations with the King. Upon a suggestion, which came to nothing, that troops should be sent from Spain to the relief of Turin, he wrote to Godolphin (June 18, 1706):

The Duke of Savoy has desired that Lord Peterborough may go with the succours. That part is left to the King of Spain, who, I suppose, will not be sorry to part with him, and his Lordship will be naturally willing enough to go, if he does not suspect that it will make the King of Spain easy.<sup>2</sup>

Godolphin, while increasingly distressed by all he heard from Spain, was for a while uncertain as to where the blame lay. Lord Peterborough's letter, he wrote (July 18),

is full of extraordinary flights and artificial turns. But one may see by it that there is room for everything that has been thought or said of his conduct there; and, at the same time, by that and other letters of more credit, nothing ever was so weak, so shameful, and so unaccountable, in every point, as the conduct of the . . . King of Spain's German followers.<sup>3</sup>

And the next day: ". . . Vanity and passion are capable of carrying people who have no principle to do strange things." The Cabinet were by now unanimous that Galway should assume the supreme command. "I think this is right for the service," wrote Godolphin, "but how it may make him [Peterborough] fly out, I cannot answer." Marlborough on August 5 concurred. "The Cabinet Council are certainly in the right in advising the Queen to give the command to Lord Galway."

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS. Extract.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, *iii*, 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

## MADRID AND TURIN

"I agree with you," he wrote to Godolphin (August 16), that the Germans that are with King Charles are good for nothing ; but I believe the anger and aversion he has for Lord Peterborough is the greatest cause of taking the resolution of going to Saragossa, which I am afraid will prove fatal ; for Mr Crowe told me that he once said to him that he would never have anything to do with Lord Peterborough, that he would not accept of health from him ; I suppose this expression is better in Spanish than English.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of August Godolphin's judgment had turned finally against Peterborough. He wrote to Marlborough (August 13/24) :

Lord Peterborough has written a volume to Mr Secretary Hedges. It is a sort of remonstrance against the King of Spain and his Ministers, in the first place ; and, secondly, a complaint against all the orders and directions sent from hence, and as if he had not authority enough given him, either at sea or land. In a word, he is both useless and grievous there, and is preparing to be as troublesome here whenever he is called home.<sup>2</sup>

Of Peterborough's letter he wrote (August 15/26) :

. . . It is a sort of two-edged sword ; first, a remonstrance against King Charles, in terms as unmannerly as unjust ; and, secondly, it is prepared to fall on anybody here that shall be in his displeasure.<sup>3</sup>

By mid-September Peterborough had entirely lost Marlborough's confidence.

I hope he [the King of Spain] will also advise with Lord Galway ; but I must confess, if my opinion were to be taken, Lord Peterborough should not be consulted. *I do not think much ceremony ought to be used in removing him from a place where he has hazarded the loss of the whole country.*<sup>4</sup>

Peterborough, however, continued to write to Sarah in his sprightly style, to which she was by no means insensible.

September 4, 1706

. . . The most disagreeable country in the world is Spain ; the most pleasing, England ; our German Ministry and Spanish

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*

## MARLBOROUGH

statesmen much alike ; their officers the greatest robbers, and their soldiers the greatest cowards ; the only tolerable thing, your sex, and that attended with the greatest dangers. Judge then, madam, of my joy and disappointment when I soon expected the honour of seeing your Grace, after a war ended in a year, and a treaty finished in two months.

These pleasing thoughts I had, but I submit to the faults and misfortunes of others, not my own. Hitherto I have been only acquainted with success, but attended with inconceivable fatigues. Perhaps I may now have a reprieve or at least the satisfaction of submitting to whatever the Queen shall desire or command.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough's comment upon Sarah's correspondence with Peterborough was withering.

### *John to Sarah*

What you say concerning Lord Peterborough and his fair lady is certainly very just, for there is nothing that may not be expected from them. I have observed, since I have been in the world, that the next misfortune to that of having friendship with such people is that of having any dispute with them, and that care should be taken to have as little to do with them as possible.<sup>2</sup>

As the summer advanced the London Cabinet became deeply concerned to reinforce the armies in Spain. Charles III, Galway, and all their agents vied with one another in appeals for troops. Where could they be found ? At the beginning of August all the preparations for the "descent" were complete.<sup>3</sup> Lord Rivers and Guiscard, at the head of 8200 men, convoyed and carried by Sir Cloudesley Shovell with a strong squadron, sailed on August 10 for the Charente. All were forced back by a gale on the 15th into Torbay. There had been lively discussion in secret circles whether the Spanish theatre was not a more promising and, indeed, more necessary alternative. When the whole expedition was thrown back upon the English coast the debate renewed itself with vigour. Guiscard was searchingly re-examined upon the prospects of a local rising. Naturally he could not give precise guarantees

<sup>1</sup> Coxé, iii, 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 84.

## MADRID AND TURIN

of the effect which such a landing would produce. Only the attempt could prove the facts. The Cabinet, therefore, after weeks of disputing, resolved to divert the ships and troops to the Peninsula. On October 12 they sailed for Lisbon, upon what ultimately proved a melancholy errand. Marlborough, though he submitted with good grace, was deeply disappointed. Guiscard, his dream of playing a great part in the war destroyed, seems to have been thrown completely off his balance, and drummed his heels in the antechambers of Whitehall, corroded with bitterness. To the public in England and Holland the great event in Spain had been the entry of King Charles into Madrid; and it was not until late in the year that this favourable impression faded. Meanwhile a new triumph in another quarter had cheered the whole Alliance.

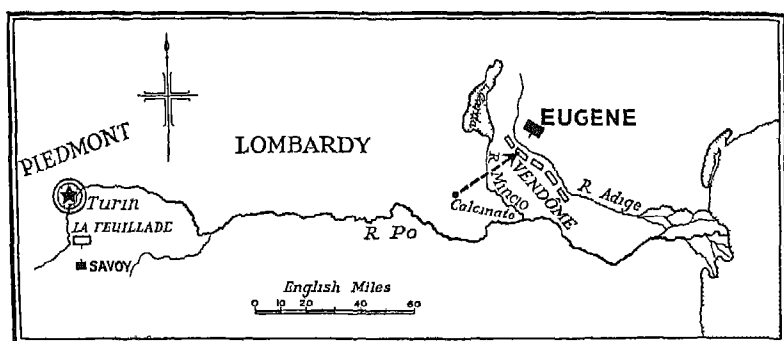
## THE RELIEF OF TURIN

Louis XIV and his circle at Versailles had harboured solid hopes of the Italian campaign. The Duke of Vendôme there commanded 150 battalions and 180 squadrons. If Saint-Simon's account of the filthy habits and arrogant manners of Vendôme is well founded, the Marshal must have also possessed extraordinary personal force and military qualities to have been so long employed as the first soldier of France. The blood of Henry IV, which flowed through a bastard channel in his veins, gave him a sure position at the Court; but no one reading the successes and shortcomings of his many campaigns can doubt that he was a man recognizably built upon a larger scale than the common run. His victory at Calcinato had driven the Imperialists round the corner of Lake Garda, across the Mincio, and into the foothills at the mouth of the Brenner Pass. The King had prescribed an early offensive, well knowing how tardy were the Imperialist preparations, and the approach of the German reinforcements which Marlborough had laboured so long to set in motion. Once this success and the delay resulting from it had been gained, the King's directions were precise.



## MARLBOROUGH

The French troops in Italy should form two equal armies, one under Marshal La Feuillade to besiege Turin, and the other under Vendôme, who was also commander-in-chief, to cover the siege and the French conquests by holding the Adige both in Lombardy and Piedmont. Here was the most forward line that could be chosen. Behind it the Mincio, the Po, and a succession of streams from the Alps lay between Turin and all relief. The best of all protective positions is one where the covering army is close enough to the



ITALY (MAY 1706)

besieging troops for easy transference of forces from one front to the other. The distance of over two hundred miles from the Adige to Turin threw the two French armies out of joint. On the other hand, Eugene would have to make his long journey across an almost indefinite series of obstacles.

That prince had reached and rallied the Imperialist army on the morrow of Calcinato: "I succeeded so well," he wrote, "that the same day the greater part was reassembled in a few hours."<sup>1</sup> He had confronted Vendôme at Limone in such a posture that, although the Marshal was twice as strong, he did not attack. Eugene withdrew at his own discretion and sheltered in the mountains until he could restore his army. While he awaited his reinforcements Vendôme and his generals fortified the eighty-mile course of the Adige from Verona to the Adriatic. The defences which the French built

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Count Daun, April 22; *Feldzüge*, Series I, viii, Suppt., 86.

## MADRID AND TURIN

were remarkable in strength and extent ; but reinforcements of very good troops were approaching Prince Eugene. His field strength on May 12 amounted to twenty-nine thousand men, including five thousand Prussians, and there were marching down to him over twenty-one thousand drafts and accretions, including seven thousand five hundred Palatines and Saxe-Gothas, the whole constituting a compact army of fifty thousand men, of which nine thousand were cavalry.<sup>1</sup>

In this somewhat tense situation Vendôme received the King's orders to take the command against Marlborough. He was asked by Chamillart his opinion upon Marshal Marsin as his successor. "Marsin," he wrote,

is a brave man, just and honourable, but he always adopts the opinion of whoever speaks to him last, which is a great defect in a commander-in-chief, whose business it is to lead others. A will of iron is needed to confront the difficulties here, and if the King orders me to leave Italy, Marshal Berwick is the only

<sup>1</sup> The following is the order of battle in Eastern Italy (May 12, 1706) (*Feldzüge*, Series I, viii, 130) :

	<i>In Eugene's Army</i>	<i>Expected Reinforce- ments</i>
12 Imperial infantry regiments . . . . .	12,100	4,850
Hayducken . . . . .	1,000	
Wolfenbittel . . . . .	800	
Hildesheim . . . . .	500	300
Prussians : 11 battalions . . . . .	5,000	
Palatines : 2 regiments . . . . .	1,400	1,000
10 new battalions . . . . .		5,000
Saxe-Gothas . . . . .		1,500
7 Imperial Piedmontese regiments . . . . .	5,250	2,180
<i>Infantry totals</i> . . . . .	<u>26,050</u>	<u>14,830</u>
Cavalry now serviceable . . . . .	2,800	
Imperial reinforcements . . . . .		4,300
Palatine recruits . . . . .		300
Palatine reinforcements . . . . .		1,200
Saxe-Gothas . . . . .		600
<i>Cavalry totals</i> . . . . .	<u>2,800</u>	<u>6,400</u>
<i>Grand totals</i> . . . . .	<u>28,850</u>	<u>21,230</u>

*Final total* : 50,080, including 9200 cavalry.

## MARLBOROUGH

man who can fill my place. But I must also say to you that my recall before the capture of Turin, and at a time when we are assured that Prince Eugene intends to take active measures, involves the hazarding of everything. Once Turin is captured all the difficulties of the war here would be levelled out, and there is reason to think that the town will fall before Marlborough has taken any of the towns which the King holds in Flanders.<sup>1</sup>

He added the next day a strong recommendation that Marsin, if he were sent, should be sustained by a prince of the blood. "In Italy a name is required even more than in any other land, for the Italian princes are far from having the same respect for a marshal of France as for a prince. . . . The loss of Italy would involve the loss of everything, and therefore it is impossible to be too careful."<sup>2</sup> This advice, implying as it did that Vendôme himself possessed both the iron will and the princely quality which were indispensable, was well received by Louis XIV. He appointed his nephew Philip, Duke of Orleans, to the Italian command, with Marsin as his coadjutor. Vendôme was in full accord with their general instructions to prevent Prince Eugene from crossing the Adige while the siege of Turin proceeded. Highly pleased, he wrote :

All other lines of defence [than the Adige] are very dangerous. We should rather sacrifice the army than give up this river and admit the enemy to the Brescianese. We are now, God be thanked, in strong positions everywhere here, and well entrenched, so that it will be easy for us to hold our ground, and if, as is rumoured, the enemy intends to make an attempt, he will suffer for it.<sup>3</sup>

It was agreed that he should not quit the Italian command until the Duke of Orleans and Marshal Marsin arrived, and he could explain the position to them.

The siege of Turin began before May 15<sup>4</sup> as prescribed from Versailles. Duke Victor Amadeus, with the remnants of his faithful Savoyard army, sustained by a loyal population,

<sup>1</sup> Letter of June 16, 1706 ; Pelet, vi, 639-640.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 642.

<sup>4</sup> Actually May 14.

## MADRID AND TURIN

was aided by a modest Imperial force under General Daun. The French round the greater part of Turin built lines of circum- and contravallation from within which they prosecuted the siege by sap and battery. Victor Amadeus did not remain inside this unfinished circle. With about six thousand cavalry he quitted his capital, moved freely about his domains, and hampered the siege from the open country. Marshal La Feuillade's reputation, never high in the French service, had suffered during the campaigns of 1704 and 1705. His marriage in 1702 with a "cruelly ugly" daughter of Chamillart, the apparently indispensable Minister, had alone secured him in his command. He was a light and vain man, whose considerable energies were not guided by sagacity or proportion. Saint-Simon's scathing comments are perhaps excessive. "... A heart corrupted through and through, a soul of mud, a jaunty and avowed unbeliever."<sup>1</sup> The capture of Turin in the shortest possible time was evidently the supreme French objective. With the fall of the capital, and the addition of La Feuillade's besiegers to Vendôme's covering army, the conquest of Savoy and Northern Italy would be complete. Naples and the south of Italy should fall automatically to the victors. But, instead of bringing the siege forward by the daily personal presence of the commander, La Feuillade left this dominant operation to subordinate generals, and set off in pursuit of Victor Amadeus and his vexatious cavalry. He hunted him near and far among the foothills of the Alps, and through a countryside where every peasant was against France.

History must admire the military conduct of the Duke of Savoy. He proved himself an adversary at once fugitive and dangeous. Day after day a swarm of French horsemen followed the Piedmontese flying column; but the Duke was always a day ahead. After three weeks of marches and ambuscades he was still at large as a dangerous fighting factor. He was even suspected of a design upon Nice. From his changing bivouacs La Feuillade presumed to control the siege operations, and studied the reports of his engineers. The

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon, iii, 196-197.

## MARLBOROUGH

defenders and citizens of Turin were stubborn. They knew they guarded the title-deeds of Savoy and its existence as a state. Most severe bombardments not only of the works but of the city were resolutely endured. The siege went forward at a snail's pace.

As soon as the situation was realized in Paris Chamillart, as Minister and as father-in-law, wrote his warning. How imprudent to neglect the siege! Old Vauban had delivered an adverse opinion. At the Court voices already called La Feuillade a self-seeker, hoping to boast the capture of a reigning prince, while following a will-o'-the-wisp. "Your honour is at stake," wrote Chamillart.<sup>1</sup> But La Feuillade, although disconcerted by what he saw on his fleeting visit to the trenches on July 7, obstinately continued his chase, and finally brought his quarry to bay as far afield as the mouth of the Luserna valley. Here the Duke was found so strongly posted that he could not be assailed.

As the weeks had passed the French victory at Calcinato was eclipsed and effaced by the relief of Barcelona and the thunderbolt of Ramillies. The Venetian republic, vexed by the exactions of Vendôme's troops, leaned in its neutrality towards the Empire and Prince Eugene. Through the bank in Venice Marlborough, side-tracking Vienna, paid upon his own note of hand direct to Eugene 200,000 ducats, part produce of the loan he had raised and subscribed to in London. English cash flowed steadily by this channel. The army of the Empire and Sea Powers was fed, paid, and equipped by the end of June. Strict behaviour and ready money gained the inhabitants of the Venetian mainland territories to the allied cause. Eugene felt himself able to infringe Venetian neutrality with impunity. This fact doubled the front which Vendôme must watch from Lake Garda to the Adriatic. He might be struck at any point. He feared particularly an attack between the lake and Verona. But Eugene had already decided to pierce the line nearly sixty miles to the southward. On June 27 he wrote to Victor Amadeus, "I have brought boats to a number of places to alarm the

<sup>1</sup> Pelet, vi, 194.

## MADRID AND TURIN

enemy everywhere, but I think of attempting the real passage below Badia.”<sup>1</sup>

We now see another of the examples, numberless in the text-books, of the difficulties of defending lengthy river lines at right-angles to the advance of a determined enemy. Eugene in the last days of June, without waiting for his final reinforcements, the Hessians, and leaving garrisons in Verona and opposite the various bridge-heads on the Upper Adige, marched southward through Venetian territory with between twenty-five and thirty thousand men. Vendôme's forces were probably somewhat superior. But what are thirty thousand men spread along a hundred miles of river and fortifications, when an almost equal force may thrust at one of the many passages, all of which must be guarded? Vendôme had been much pressed by his anxious subordinate, General Saint-Frémont, to abandon that river altogether and take up the less ambitious line of the Mincio, about twenty miles farther west. He inveighed against such suggestions. He had stigmatized the line of the Mincio as the worst that could be adopted.

But while he was watching vigilantly his defences between Verona and the lake, Eugene, on July 4, 5, and 6, passed about twelve thousand men in various detachments across the Adige near Rovigo and moved to attack the French posts, which retired to Badia. Vendôme obstinately believed this was a feint. “You can be sure,” he reported on July 10 to Versailles, “that Prince Eugene will not be able to disturb the siege of Turin. We have too many positions in which to stop him, for his even dreaming of bringing relief.”<sup>2</sup> That very day Eugene had driven in General Saint-Frémont's posts over a wide front and was himself approaching the banks of the Po.<sup>3</sup> He had thus turned the whole line of the French defences. Eugene was astonished at his own easy advance. “I cannot imagine at all,” he wrote to the Emperor, “why the army has abandoned all its works at such speed.”<sup>4</sup> Vendôme

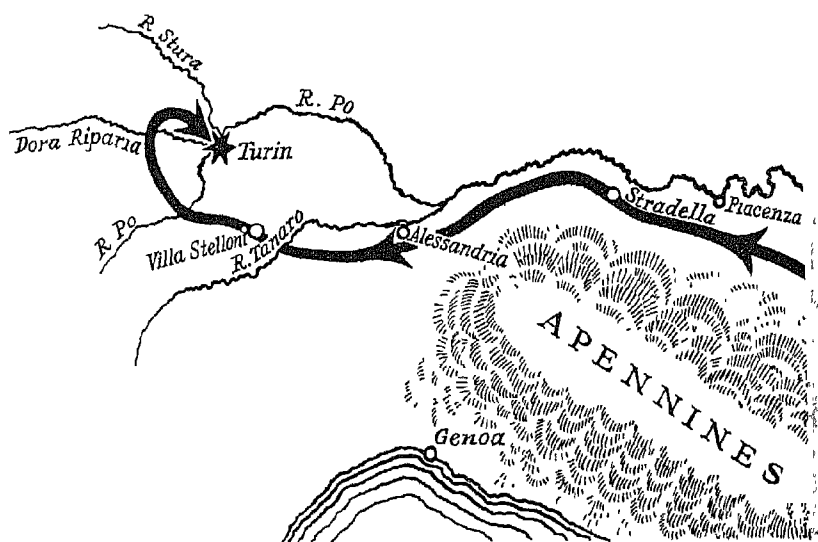
<sup>1</sup> *Feldzüge*, Series I, viii, Suppt., 174.

<sup>2</sup> Pelet, vi, 200.

<sup>3</sup> See map of Eugene's march at pp. 188, 189.

<sup>4</sup> *Feldzüge*, Series I, viii, Suppt., 184.

## MARLBOROUGH



EUGENE'S

now made haste to accommodate himself to circumstances, and explained airily to Paris that his general retreat had placed him in a much better position. This was the moment of Marshal Marsin's arrival. Vendôme handed over his command, and, perhaps with less reluctance than he would have felt a fortnight sooner, entered his coach and set off through Milan to face Marlborough in Flanders.

A few days earlier the Duke of Orleans had arrived before Turin. He found the siege-works progressing slowly in the face of stubborn resistance and heavy cannonading. Marshal La Feuillade was still absent pursuing the Duke of Savoy, and the attack had palpably languished. Orleans had left Versailles under the impression of Vauban's pessimistic predictions. The aged engineer had from the winter onward declared vehemently that the way to attack Turin was by first securing the fortified eminence of the Capuchins' monastery. This gained, the town would become untenable, and as a

# MADRID AND TURIN

## TRENTINO



### MARCH

second major operation the reduction of the citadel could begin. But he had recognized that for this task eighty-five battalions were required instead of sixty-five, which was all the King could spare La Feuillade. In that case, said Vauban, it would be better to leave Turin for another year. The young French Prince, who had, as his mother wrote to the Electress Sophia, “appeared three fingers taller” on being given his first important command, found that out of La Feuillade’s sixty-five battalions, as many as thirteen battalions and several cannon were diverting themselves before the walls of Cherasco, forty miles to the south of Turin, whither the Marshal had followed the elusive Duke. He wrote long and by no means sanguine letters to the King.<sup>1</sup>

Marshal Marsin had no sooner assumed command and ranged the French covering army along the Mincio and the Oglio than these lines were in their turn compromised

<sup>1</sup> Pelet, vi 231 et seq.



## MARLBOROUGH

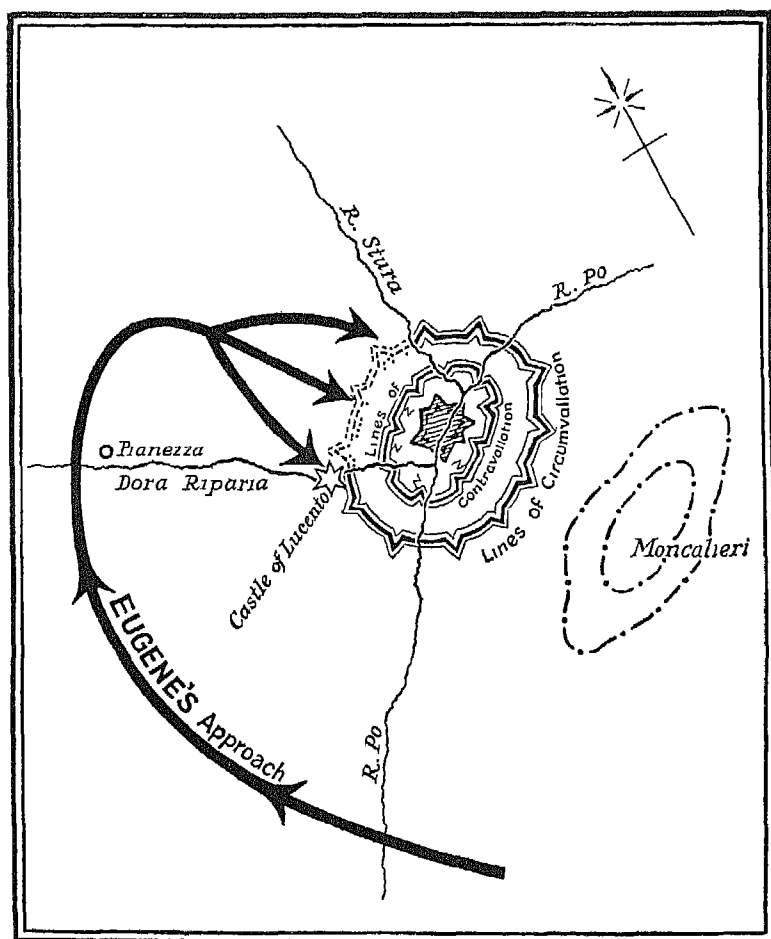
by the steady advance of Prince Eugene. On July 17 he crossed the Po and marched through Ferrara to Finale, which he occupied on the 24th. The Duke of Orleans, having visited the siege, joined Marsin on the 19th. There being no doubt that Eugene was marching to the relief of Turin, the French command resolved to concentrate the covering army and keep pace with him along the northern bank of the Po. Orleans wished to bar his path at the defile of Stradella, but Marsin, who seemed strangely despondent, dissuaded him. At the worst, by the method adopted they would join La Feuillade's army and meet Eugene with superior forces on the lines of circumvallation at Turin. However, the Prince of Hesse, with the Hessian contingent, tardy but four thousand strong, had now joined the six thousand men Eugene had left at Verona. The arrival of this new corps, which had immediately become active, forced Marsin to leave a large detachment of at least the same number under General Medavi to face them south of Lake Garda. Eugene's long westward march was therefore virtually unresisted. By August 5, having crossed the Secchia unopposed, he entered Carpi. On the 14th he was at Reggio and on the 19th at Piacenza. To avoid the fierce heats he marched by moonlight, but the difficulties of finding food and water were serious and the sufferings of the Imperialists severe. He found the pass of Stradella undefended, and, turning south to avoid Alessandria, which held a French garrison, he crossed the Tanaro on the 29th and entered Piedmont. On September 1 he joined Victor Amadeus at Villa Stelloni, about twenty miles due south of Turin. The six thousand Savoyard cavalry raised Eugene's strength to thirty thousand men, besides several thousands of armed peasants and local militia from the countryside. The moment had come for what might well have seemed a desperate feat of arms.

The French combined army amounted to nearly sixty thousand men. Their obvious course, and one which Vendôme might well have taken, was to suspend the siege, form the order of battle, and march with every available man to attack the daring enemy wherever they could be found in

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## MADRID AND TURIN

the open country. The Duke of Orleans urged this upon Marsin ; but the Marshal, plunged in ever-deepening gloom, would not agree. The unfortunate Prince, nominally at the



THE BATTLE OF TURIN

head of the army, had all the right ideas, but, bred in the strict family discipline of Versailles, he had not the personal authority to enforce them upon marshals experienced in so many campaigns. La Feuillade consumed much strength in

## MARLBOROUGH

two furious and unsuccessful assaults upon the fortress, and for the rest the French army awaited passively whatever stroke Eugene and the warlike Duke might launch upon them.

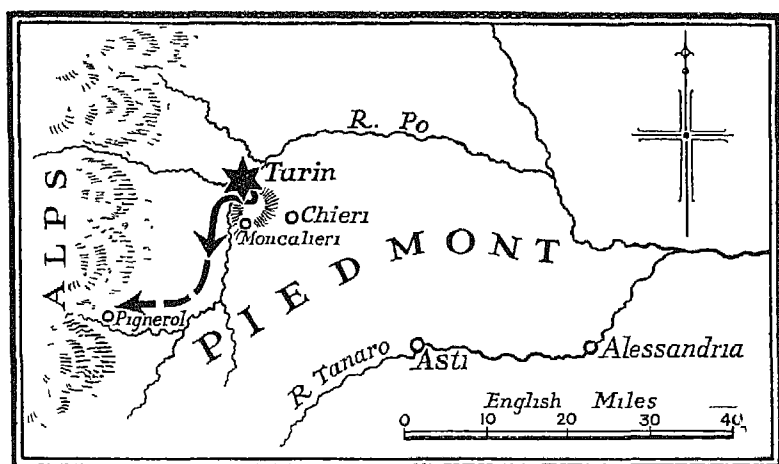
This was not long delayed. Never in his fifty years of war was Prince Eugene more cool and confident. The French were already in his judgment "half beaten" by strategic manœuvres, and the rest would be settled on the field of battle. On the 4th and 5th he crossed the Po and the Dora Riparia, seized Pianezza, and began to form the allied army between that place and the Stura river, on the north-west side of the city. His headquarters that night were three miles from Turin.

The siege-works and their exterior protecting lines had never, as we have seen, been completed, and the allies were now drawing up opposite the gap by which Victor Amadeus had always maintained a precarious communication with the city. Frantic efforts were made by the French during the 6th to fortify the threatened sector. Again Orleans pleaded that the siege should be suspended and all forces concentrated to meet the impending attack. He was overruled at the council of war, and, since he insisted, Marsin reminded him that he had no authority over La Feuillade's besieging troops. Thus the French actually faced the Allies with about fifty squadrons and only seventeen battalions in such entrenchments as could be raised in twenty-four hours. They had the benefit neither of lines of circumvallation nor of their large superiority.

At daybreak on the 7th Eugene ordered the general attack. As he mounted his horse he was asked to fix his headquarters for the night. "In Turin," he replied gaily, and rode forward into the battle. Palatines and Prussians led the assault upon the enemy's right, and the whole front was soon engaged. Eugene, Victor Amadeus, and the Prince of Saxe-Gotha fought throughout in the van. Eugene's horse was shot under him. Twice the assailants were repulsed; but at the third attack the sturdy Brandenburgers stormed and pierced the French right wing. The centre gave way in consequence; and only the left wing, which had strong assistance

## MADRID AND TURIN

from the batteries in La Feuillade's siege-works, made an orderly retreat into these defences. Marshal Marsin, exposing himself devotedly, fell mortally wounded into the hands of the Allies. The Duke of Orleans, having recorded his protest in writing the night before, set an example to all soldiers. He was twice wounded before he quitted the field. By one o'clock the French were completely broken. Count



THE FRENCH RETREAT FROM ITALY

Daun, the governor of Turin, sallying out upon them with a large part of the garrison, completed their ruin. They lost three thousand killed and wounded, and six thousand were taken prisoners. The Allies lost more than five thousand men. The road into the city was now open.

As soon as the Duke of Orleans learned that Marsin had fallen he ordered the raising of the siege, and took it for granted that the retreat would be eastward through Chieri and Asti towards Alessandria. His coach was proceeding in that direction when he was informed that the enemy already held the heights of Moncalieri. These were no more than the armed peasants and militia who had appeared in this quarter. They were sufficient, however, to drive the French out of Italy; for, instead of marching back into

## MARLBOROUGH

Lombardy, with its many fortresses and numerous detachments of French troops, including the strong force under General Medavi, they now turned west and marched on Pignerol and towards France. La Feuillade's army came off in good order with some of their field guns, and the bulk of the cavalry joined them by various routes. They abandoned the whole of the siege artillery and munitions in the lines. They abandoned more : they abandoned the war in Italy.

It was not till some time afterwards that the secret of Marshal Marsin's morbid depression was explained. On the day before the battle he had given his confessor the following painful letter for Chamillart :

. . . Your generous sentiments compel me to make you an avowal of my weakness, which makes me feel that all is mortal, and I must soon submit to this general law.

As this letter is not to be given you till after my death, should it come this year, I beg you to preserve the secret of the weakness which haunts me. Ever since I received the orders of the King to go to Italy I have not been able to clear from my mind the conviction that I shall be killed in this campaign ; and Death, in the workings of God's pity, thrusts itself upon me at every moment and possesses me day and night ; since I have been in this country nothing can relieve my presentiment except my hope in God. . . .

P.S. At this moment the enemy are crossing the Po.<sup>1</sup>

As if to mock the ignominious retreat of the French army, Fortune favoured General Medavi by Lake Garda. The Prince of Hesse with his powerful corps had captured Goito, and was moving upon Castiglione when Medavi attacked him with slightly superior numbers. A fierce action was fought near this town on September 9. Hesse was driven from the field, nearly half his force being killed or captured. The successful general was preparing to exploit his victory when the news of the disaster at Turin and the retreat of the army reached him. He at once marched southwards and distributed his twenty battalions among the fortresses of Mantua, Pavia, Alessandria,

<sup>1</sup> The original of this letter is still preserved in the Archives du Dépôt de la Guerre, vol. 1966, No. 460. See also Pelet, vi, 277.

## MADRID AND TURIN

and Milan, thus imparting to all these strongholds a serious defensive power. If the main French army had retreated eastward, instead of yielding to a homing instinct, they would have remained masters of the Milanese, and the relief of Turin with all its glory might have remained but a local episode. In the event, however, it decided the fate of Italy. The impulsive plans which were formed at Versailles for a renewed invasion, chilled by the approach of winter, never bore fruit. The fortresses of Piedmont were blockaded or reduced one by one, and presently there began that series of negotiations both military and political which before the opening of 1707 had brought the war in Italy to a close.

## CHAPTER X

### THE YEAR OF VICTORY

1706,  
June-  
October

STRONG reinforcements had joined Marlborough at the end of June. The Prussians, the Hanoverians, and the Palatines, in all nearly twenty thousand admirable troops, crossed the Scheldt and were posted from Alost to Brussels. Here they isolated Dendermonde and the towns of Brabant, and were within easy reach of the main army in case of need. After Ostend had capitulated Marlborough advanced to Courtrai, with his headquarters at Helchin, and thence menaced the three fortresses of Ypres, Menin, and Tournai. This movement puzzled Villeroy, who saw the need both of strengthening their garrisons and forming a field army to preoccupy the besiegers. He felt, however, unable to withdraw any of the twenty-five battalions and nine squadrons with which the aged Vauban was covering the coast fortresses, since Marlborough could so easily march west against Nieupoort and Dunkirk.<sup>1</sup> The dispersion of the French armies in Flanders was now grievous. One hundred and ten battalions of field troops were scattered in eleven fortresses from Nieupoort to Namur; yet none was safe. The detachments arriving from the Rhine were distributed here and there as rumour mentioned the next point of attack.

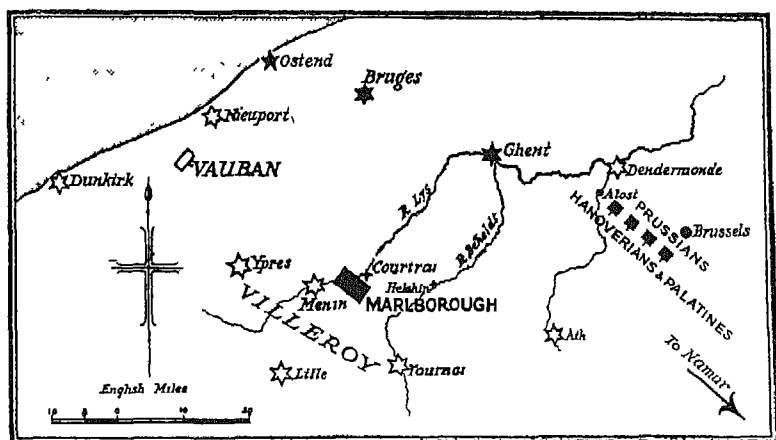
This was in fact, as we have seen already, decided. Menin, on the soil of France, "reckoned the key to the French conquests in the Netherlands,"<sup>2</sup> enlisted the desires and would presumably engage the energies of the Dutch, and was acceptable to Marlborough. It was a first-class fortress, one of Vauban's later conceptions, built since the Peace of Nimwegen. This model of the defensive art was garrisoned by six thousand men under a group of distinguished generals and engineers, among whom the resolute Caraman will be

<sup>1</sup> See Pelet, vi, 69 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Lediard, ii, 99.

## THE YEAR OF VICTORY

remembered. The French controlled the sluices, and further protected it by inundations which robbed the Scheldt and the Lys so seriously that the allied siege train had to come by road. From this cause, although Menin was invested on July 23, the trenches could not be opened and the batteries established till August 4. After a fortnight's sapping and bombarding, the moment for the attack of the counterscarp



FLANDERS: JULY 1706

was reached. Marlborough came himself from the covering army to superintend this serious attempt. The contingents which had suffered least in the battle, or had not been engaged in the campaign, were chosen for the ordeal. The Duke, having spent the previous day in preparation, entered the trenches on the evening of the 18th, and at seven o'clock the explosion of two mines heralded the storm. Eight thousand British and Prussian infantry under Lord Orkney and General Scholtz marched to the assault of the work called the "Half-moon of Ypres." After two hours' stubborn fighting they mastered the covered way and established themselves along the ramparts. The assailants lost fourteen hundred men (the French assert four thousand). Among these the British bore the brunt. Ingoldsby's regiment alone had fifteen officers killed or wounded. The Royal Irish



## MARLBOROUGH

suffered heavily. "Here," says Captain Parker, "we paid for our looking on at Ramillies, having had two captains and five subalterns killed and eight officers wounded, among whom I was one."<sup>1</sup> In the judgment of the armies it was the sharpest siege-fighting since Kaiserswerth in 1702; but it was decisive.

The next day the signals for parley were made, and on the morning of August 22 the end came. "Yesterday morning," wrote Marlborough, "the enemy at Menin planted a white flag on their breach, and as I was there I immediately ordered an exchange of hostages."<sup>2</sup> The highest honours and accommodations of war were conceded to the garrison, who marched off to Douai five or six days before, in Marlborough's judgment, the place need have fallen. They had lost 1500 men and the Allies 2500, almost as many as at Ramillies. Thus for the first time had British soldiers trod "the bloody road to Menin."

Vendôme had arrived at Valenciennes from Italy and superseded Villeroy on the day the trenches were opened before Menin. He found himself in command of an army which, though almost as numerous as the enemy and every day increasing, was dispersed among the fortresses and utterly discouraged. "No one," he wrote to Chamillart (August 5),

would answer for the fidelity of the Spanish troops, but that vexes me much less than the sadness and prostration which surrounds me here. I will do my best to reanimate our people, but it will be no easy task, if indeed I can manage it, *for every one is ready to doff his hat when one mentions the name of Marlborough*. If the soldiers and troopers were in the same mood, there would be nothing for it but to throw up the campaign. But I hope for something better. I do not despair of rallying the officers by appeal and example, . . . but let me tell you candidly that the job is much harder than I expected. Whatever happens I can promise you I will not lose heart.<sup>3</sup>

Marlborough as soon as he knew Vendôme was coming

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Coxé, iii, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Pelet, vi, 94.

## THE YEAR OF VICTORY

to Flanders had asked Eugene for his opinion of him. The reply was :

He is beloved by the common soldiers, and once he has taken a decision he adheres to it, so that nothing whatever can shake him. He is great at entrenching. If his plans are at all upset, he finds it difficult to adjust himself even in an action, and leaves the remedy to chance. In sieges he is full of enterprise. He is ever ready to challenge an army, but unless he has a large superiority he will not attack if he finds that it intends to stand its ground.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough's own first impressions can be judged from his letters :

*August 9*

M. de Vendôme has given orders to all the troops to be in readiness to march at twenty-four hours' warning, so that in three or four days he may draw them together. By his language we ought to expect another battle, but I cannot think the King of France will venture it ; if he should, I hope and pray that the blessing of God may continue with us.<sup>2</sup>

*August 23*

The Duke of Vendôme continues to talk more than I believe he intends to perform ; however, he strengthens himself every day with all the troops he can possibly get.<sup>3</sup>

Vendôme set himself at once to restore the morale and to gather a field army from the fortresses and reinforcements. He proposed to mix the Spanish among the French troops and to stand behind the Lower Deule and the Lys. He was in no condition to interfere with the siege of Menin. But in a cavalry skirmish on August 19 he cut up a party of Marlborough's foragers and captured Quartermaster-General Cadogan, who was riding too far afield. This news reached Marlborough before the attack on the Menin counterscarp. His distress was acute.

"An officer is just come to me," he wrote to Sarah,

to give me an account of the forage we have made this day, and he tells me that poor Cadogan is taken prisoner or killed, which gives me a great deal of uneasiness, for he loved me, and I could

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 29.

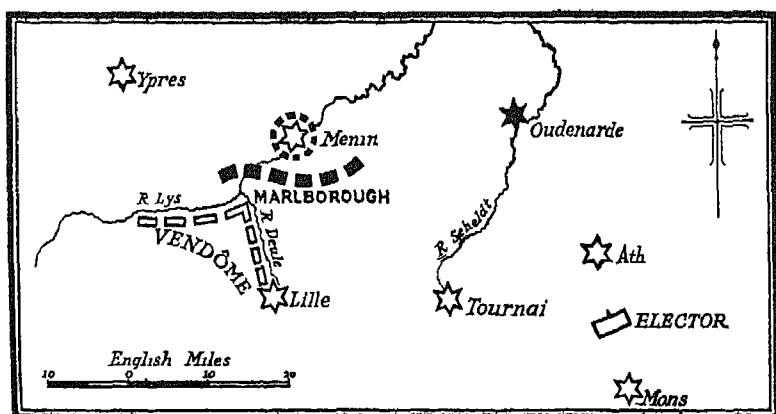
<sup>2</sup> *Coxe*, iii, 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

## MARLBOROUGH

rely on him. I am now sending a trumpet to the Governor of Tournai to know if he be alive; for the horse that beat him came from that garrison. I have ordered the trumpet to return this night, for I shall not be quiet till I know his fate.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough's fears were groundless. Vendôme, knowing how high Cadogan stood in Marlborough's affection, released him at once on parole as an act of personal courtesy



## THE SIEGE OF MENIN

to his adversary, and Marlborough made haste to exchange the Baron Pallavicini, a Lieutenant-General taken at Ramillies,<sup>2</sup> in order to regain Cadogan's services.

Later in the year he wrote about Cadogan to Godolphin:

CAMBRON

Oct. 24, 1706

I find by your last letter that applications are made by Mr Mordaunt and others for my brother's place in the Tower.<sup>3</sup> I beg you will not be engaged, and that the Queen will gratify me on this occasion. I would not have this place disposed of as yet; but when I shall think it a proper time, I would then beg the Queen would be pleased to let Brigadier Cadogan have it, since it will be provision for him in time of peace. As I

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 6.

<sup>2</sup> A Savoyard who had entered French service when Victor Amadeus joined the Allies.

<sup>3</sup> General Charles Churchill had accepted the governorship of Guernsey.

## THE YEAR OF VICTORY

would put my life in his hands, so I will be answerable for his faithfulness and duty to the Queen. I have for the Queen's service obliged him this war to expose his life very often, so that in justice I owe him this good office.<sup>1</sup>

By the 19th Vendôme had mustered 63 battalions and 163 squadrons from Armentières to Lille in the angle of the Lys and the Deule.<sup>2</sup> The Elector thought this line dangerously extended, and there was considerable argument, in which Versailles supported him. Nevertheless, a formed French army now being in the field, Marlborough was limited to undertaking only one siege at a time. The most promising towns were Ypres, Dendermonde, and Ath. The capture of Ypres would open the coast for clearance, but it was now late in the year to exploit success in that quarter. Moreover, if Marlborough moved towards the sea he would have to leave heavy detachments to protect Brussels and Brabant. The capture of Ath, on the other hand, would cover Brabant; it would keep the allied army closely in touch and broaden the front for further operations. To bring forward the artillery for the siege of Ath it was necessary to free the navigation of the Dender by the capture of Dendermonde. This siege, though impeded by exceptional physical difficulties, was the least exposed to French interference. Accordingly on August 26 Churchill was sent against Dendermonde with strong forces.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

HELCHIN

August 26, 1706

. . . I saw the garrison of Menin march out yesterday; they were near 4500 men. The fear they had of being made prisoners of war made them give up the place five or six days sooner than, in decency, they ought to have done.

My brother will be to-morrow before Dendermonde, and I hope the cannon may fire by Monday; and if we have no rain, five or six days may make us masters of that place, which has always been thought unattackable; and in truth we should not have thought of it, but the extraordinary drought makes us venture.

<sup>1</sup> Cox, III, 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> See also general map of Western Flanders, facing p. 556.

## MARLBOROUGH

If we succeed at Dendermonde, and can in time have more ammunition from Holland, we shall then make the siege of Ath, which will be a security to our winter quarters, notwithstanding the Duke of Vendôme's army. If we could have been sure of having the necessaries for the siege of Ypres, I believe we should have undertaken it; for that place is very difficult to be relieved when the posts [by which it can be invested] are once taken; but we can't expect the stores that are sent for in less than three weeks. . . . I give you the trouble of all this that you may see that I should have preferred Ypres before Ath, but the Dutch like Dendermonde and Ath much the best; so that I hope they will not let us want ammunition for them.<sup>1</sup>

And on August 30: "The engineer sends me word that he finds much more water at Dendermonde than he expected. I go there in three or four days, and then I shall be able to send you the certainty of what we may expect."<sup>2</sup>

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

September 9, 1706

In yours of the 23rd you were afraid that if there were any good news from this country, it would find the way over, whereas you had three packets due. When they come to you, you will find everything you could expect from hence. That of Dendermonde, making them prisoners of war, was more than was reasonable, but I saw them in a consternation. That place could never have been taken but by the hand of God, which gave us seven weeks without any rain. The rain began the next day after we had possession, and continued till this evening.

. . . The express that carried the good news to the States of our being masters of Dendermonde was dispatched in such haste that I could not write to you. I believe the King of France will be a good deal surprised when he shall hear that the garrison has been obliged to surrender themselves prisoners of war; for upon his being told that preparations were making for the siege of Dendermonde he said, "They must have an army of ducks to take it." The truth is God has blessed us with a very extraordinary season. . . . What makes it the more remarkable is that this place was never before taken, though once besieged by the French, and the King himself with the army. I hope in

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

## THE YEAR OF VICTORY

seven or eight days we shall have in this town all the cannon and ammunition that is necessary for the siege of Ath.<sup>1</sup>

From the battlefield of Turin Prince Eugene wrote to Marlborough. His letter, sent on the night of his victory, took a fortnight to reach Marlborough's headquarters at Helchin.

Your Highness will not, I am sure, be displeased to hear by the Baron de Hondorff of the signal advantage which the arms of his Imperial Majesty and his allies have gained over the enemy. You have had so great a share in it, by the succours you have procured, that you must permit me to thank you again. Marshal Marsin is taken prisoner, and mortally wounded. The troops have greatly signalized themselves. In a few days I will send you a correct account; and in the meantime refer you to that which you will hear from the bearer of this letter, who is well informed, has seen everything, and is competent to give an accurate relation. Your Highness will excuse the shortness of this letter, as I have not a moment of time.<sup>2</sup>

Marlborough's delight at his comrade's success, and, indeed, at the fruition of his own plans and labours, roused him to unusual expressions. "It is impossible," he wrote to Sarah on September 26,

for me to express the joy it has given me; *for I do not only esteem, but I really love that Prince.* This glorious action must bring France so low that if our friends can be persuaded to carry on the war one year longer with vigour, we could not fail, with the blessing of God, to have such a peace as would give us quiet in our days; but the Dutch are at this time unaccountable.<sup>3</sup>

To Heinsius (September 27) he magnified his friend's victory: "I am assured that the French take more to heart their misfortune in Italy than they did that of Ramillies."<sup>4</sup>

*John to Sarah*

GRAMETZ  
October 7

I am to return you my thanks for five of yours, all from Woodstock. I could wish with all my heart everything were more to your mind; for I find when you wrote most of them

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>4</sup> Vreede, p. 131.

## MARLBOROUGH

you had very much the spleen, and in one I had my share, for I see I lie under the same misfortune I have ever done, of not behaving myself as I ought to the Queen.

I hope Mr Hacksmore will be able to mend those faults you find in the house, but the great fault I find is that if the war should happily have ended this next year, I might the next after have lived in it; for I am resolved to be neither Minister nor courtier, not doubting the Queen will allow of it. But these are idle dreams, for whilst the war lasts I must serve, and will do it with all my heart; and if at last I am rewarded with your love and esteem, I shall end my days happily, and without it nothing can make me easy.

I am taking measures to leave the army about three weeks hence, so that I shall have the happiness of being above one month sooner with you than I have been for these last three years.<sup>1</sup>

In these great days the English Press began to present itself for the first time as a definite, permanent factor in affairs. There were already, besides the official *London Gazette*, of which Steele became editor in 1707, the *Daily Courant* and the *Postman*, both dull and semi-official. There were Defoe's *Review* and Tutchin's *Observer*, both Whig and entertaining. *The Flying Post* was another Whig paper. *The Post Boy* was Jacobite, and *Mercurius Politicus* high Tory. Many of the sharpest and some of the greatest pens in English literature sustained these fierce and sprightly rags of Grub Street. They passed from hand to hand in the coffee-houses, and post-boys carried them to lonely halls and vicarages throughout the country. It is difficult for dwellers in the twentieth century to realize the power of print in the eighteenth century. Then every word was devoured and digested, and grave persons of narrow, bitter convictions fortified themselves thereby in their prejudices and their passions. Several scores of editors, news-letter writers, and pamphleteers vied with each other in distinction, virulence, and poverty. Great nobles, astute Ministers, clubs, groups, and factions sustained a literary clatter which excited England and even echoed upon the Continent with Marlborough's cannonades.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 102-103.

## THE YEAR OF VICTORY

The maxim "There is safety in numbers" was never more true than about a free Press. If enough is printed nothing in particular counts. The larger the organ, the less an executive Government has to fear from its personal director. But in those days glittering or terrible words were written anonymously; facts or scandals, revealed by personages who had access to secret or private knowledge or gossip, were flung out by writers of genius upon a fierce and earnest public. The authors and often the printers lay hidden in obscurity. The powerful politicians of the day exploited them or hunted them down according to circumstances, but usually left them almost starving. Naturally high Tory and Whig scribes were stirred and prone to loose their arrows upon Marlborough and his wife, and also upon Godolphin. These were the largest targets. Marlborough was protected from time to time by his victories, but Godolphin, without victories and without party, was enjoyably vulnerable.

We have seen Marlborough behaving with temper and even with magnanimity about the unlucky divine Stephens, who was caught for the pillory. But during 1705 and 1706 he shows himself acutely sensitive to malicious, or, as he judged it, untruthful, criticism, especially when directed against his military conduct. He was less resentful of taunts upon his rebuffs, or disappointments in the field, than of disparagements of his successes. For these he claimed justice. When he found justice denied he was keenly distressed, and at rare moments his calm was broken by a surge of wrath. In August 1705 when he had read Dr James Drake's *Memorial of the Church of England*, wherein he had been accused of betraying the Church, he wrote to Godolphin:

I think it is the most impudent and scurrilous thing I ever read. If the author can be found I do not doubt he will be punished; for if such liberties may be taken of writing scandalous lies without being punished, no Government can stand long.<sup>1</sup>

The author of the *Memorial* was then unknown, but Godolphin set to work to find him. It was also unknown at the time that Dr Drake was the author of *Mercurius Politicus*, the

<sup>1</sup> Cox, ii, 278.



## MARLBOROUGH

high Tory anti-Government paper which from 1705 onward maintained a continuous stream of abuse against Marlborough and Godolphin in a vein that would hardly be tolerated in the freest of countries to-day. The Duke was disturbed to find the news-sheets and the coffee-houses buzzing like the Parliamentary lobbies with the rival merits of Whig and Tory generals. He did not relish officers in his Army grouping themselves upon these lines, and writing anonymous letters home according to their personal or political affections. He would have liked to put a stop to the whole process in the Army, and range them with himself upon a purely professional basis. When this proved impossible, he was forced to some extent to favour those who were loyal to him. He was plainly conscious throughout all his later campaigns that savage, implacable forces were ceaselessly striving to tear him down while he lived under the hazards of war, and that success alone could hold the wolves at bay. One single disaster would destroy him, yet all the time he had to cope with the unknowable and often, as he would put it in his habit of under-statement, "to venture."

In the weeks before Ramillies when he had deliberately condemned himself to a bleak campaign in the fortress zone he showed his anxiety that his operations should be properly represented in the Press. On May 6 he wrote to Harley :

As all truths may not be proper to be in the *Gazette*, I desire the favour of you that during this campaign when I send you in your letter, as I do now, a paper of news, you will let it be inserted in the *Postman*, and what is to be in the *Gazette* Mr Cardonnel will send it to the office as formerly. I shall depend on your friendship and judgment to leave out what you may think improper.<sup>1</sup>

This was not unreasonable. There were to be the dispatches in the official *Gazette*, but in addition there should be a bulletin or news-letter which would describe events from the standpoint of the Commander-in-Chief and his Headquarters, and in case of disputes would give his own version to his

<sup>1</sup> Bath Papers, H.M.C., i, 81.

## THE YEAR OF VICTORY

countrymen. Few generals, even in our own generation, have been so modest in their claims. Ramillies for a spell silenced the critics. They were dazzled by the lightning flash and scorched by the conflagration which followed. It was nearly a month before the voice of disparagement could be raised, and even a few weeks more before it could be heard. Then a letter from the Army found its way to London and became the talk of the town. It was from Cranstoun, of the Cameronians. This brave and accomplished officer, after paying the highest tributes to Marlborough's conduct as "a great Captain" and censuring him gently for "exposing himself like the meanest soldier," proceeded to explain how much better the battle could have been won. Cranstoun voiced the complaint of the British infantry under Orkney who had been forced by the order to retire from Autréglise and Offus, and thereafter, as they believed, from cutting the retreat of the French army. All these veteran soldiers saw this point so clearly that they saw nothing else in the whole battle. Cranstoun imagined that Cadogan had given the order out of jealousy or ignorance, and had not had Marlborough's sanction first. At any rate, this was the line he took.

Harley, all his spies and vigilance at Marlborough's disposal in this hour of triumph, intercepted one of the copies of the letter (which was unsigned) and informed Marlborough. The Duke was somewhat upset, and further vexed by the renewal of the *Observer's* attacks.

"I am obliged," he wrote to Harley on July 12,

to you for your friendly care, and I will have Major Cranstoun observed, and should be glad to have a copy of the letter concerning Ramillies, and if possible be certain of the author. I am told the *Observer* is angry with me.<sup>1</sup>

There may have been other critical letters from the British troops under Orkney's command who brooded morosely upon having been denied what they deemed their prey, and

<sup>1</sup> Bath Papers, *H.M.C.*, i, 82.

## MARLBOROUGH

their chance of distinction, for we have another letter of Marlborough's on July 8 addressed "for yourself."

I thank you for what you mention of the letters and the care you have taken to find out the authors. I should be glad to know them. . . . If you send me the copies of the letters from the army I should be glad to see them.<sup>1</sup>

Several references to this matter occur in the official correspondence. On August 5 Marlborough returns to Cranstoun: "If you could let me have a sight of the original letter of Ramillies, I could then be sure of knowing the author, having in my custody an original letter of the major's." And on August 26: "You have forgot to send me copies of Cranstoun's letters."

All this has a modern flavour. Finally in September Harley obtained Cranstoun's original letter, and Marlborough was able to identify with certainty the author. He addressed himself immediately to Cranstoun's criticism. He defended Cadogan and took the responsibility to himself. "The part in which he mentions Cadogan he is very much in the wrong, for if those troops had not been brought back they must certainly have been cut to pieces." No one aware of the masses of French cavalry drawn to the left of the hostile line by Orkney's attack, and hungrily awaiting the moment to destroy their unsupported assailants, can doubt the finality of this answer. Viewed in retrospect and with full knowledge, the secret of Ramillies is obvious; but the British infantry continued to feel they had been sacrificed, in the sense of being pulled out of the battle, so that its glory had shone on foreign blades. They had been cheated of the brunt; and this in the name of their own Captain-General. But then, thought they, it was Cadogan with his Staff mind and his maps who had misinterpreted him.

It may be noted that Marlborough, having found out the critic and replied to the criticism, never visited his displeasure upon Major Cranstoun. That officer was unconscious of the State correspondence which had passed concerning him.

<sup>1</sup> Bath Papers, *H.M.C.*, 1, 82.

## THE YEAR OF VICTORY

Indeed, what he wrote was in other respects so complimentary to Marlborough that the Duke could not really have been offended. In the following year he promoted Cranstoun Lieutenant-Colonel, and in that rank at the head of his Cameronians he was to fall heroically at Malplaquet.

There is, however, one rougher tale to tell of these times. In October 1706 Marlborough wrote in wrath to Harley :

I have by this post sent an *Observer* to Mr St Johns [*sic*]. I should be extremely obliged to you if you would speak to Lord Keeper, and see if there is any method to protect me against this rogue, who is set on by Lord Haveisham. If I can't have justice done me, I must find some that will break his and the printer's bones, which I hope will be approved by all honest Englishmen, since I serve my Queen and country with all my heart.<sup>1</sup>

This "rogue" was Tutchin, an enthusiastic Whig, described by contemporaries as "the scourge of the Highfliers," whose work took the form of dialogues between a "countryman" and the "Observer." For each of these articles of deadly malice and admirable prose Tutchin drew from his paper no more than half a guinea. The Ministry was at first reluctant to arrest Tutchin. They had already tried to punish him for seditious libel in November 1704 ; but the judges had ordered his acquittal on technical grounds. According to one story,<sup>2</sup> Tutchin in 1707 was "waylaid and beaten to death." Marlborough was not guilty of any violent act. But the law pursued the pamphleteers with heavy hand.

Earless on high, stood unabashed Defoe,  
And Tutchin flagrant from the scourge below.<sup>3</sup>

In fact Tutchin, after being flogged, died in the Queen's Bench Prison at the Mint in September 1707. In justice to the *Observer* it must be mentioned that its files contain many fine tributes to Marlborough. It recognized throughout his reluctance to enter the literary lists or to encourage others to write on his behalf. It emphasized his

<sup>1</sup> Bath Papers, H.M.C., 1, 82

<sup>2</sup> Contrast Bourne, *English Newspapers*, 1, 60 ; and D.N.B., *sub* Tutchin.

<sup>3</sup> Pope, *The Dunciad*.

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reliance on deeds instead of words: "I don't think," it remarked on one occasion in 1706, "the Duke of Marlborough will thank any one for being his Praise Trumpeter, that's a post for a pedant and a sycophant." And again: "My Lord Duke is one of the best authors this country has possessed. He's the author of conquests and victories."

"I should be glad to know the authors of letters against me," Marlborough himself told Harley in 1706, "though as long as God blesses us with success, their writing can have little weight."

And to Sarah in 1705:

I see that there is another scandalous pamphlet. The best way of putting an end to that villainy is not to appear concerned. The best of men and women have in all ages been ill-used. If we could be so happy as to behave ourselves so as to have no reason to reproach ourselves, we may then despise what rage and faction do. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Godolphin seems to have hopefully tried to endorse this opinion: "If Marlborough can conquer animosities as well as armies, his presence will be very useful in this island of Britain." Judged by the standards of those days, they were both astonishingly patient, tolerant, and merciful men. In our own enlightened and scientific epoch it will probably be felt in many great countries that if they had been more ruthless they would have been more successful.

The wonderful successes in Flanders, Italy, and Spain found no counterpart in the Empire. Under all the varied but persistent pressures of England and Holland the new Emperor had striven to the utmost limit for peace in Hungary. Although the Imperial generals had made good headway against the rebels in 1705, full rein was given to the mediations of the Sea Powers. The line which they had drawn between the contending forces was scrupulously observed by Vienna, while behind it Rakoczy made himself master of all Hungary and Transylvania. The truce for negotiations began

<sup>1</sup> September 7; Coxe, ii, 278-279.

## THE YEAR OF VICTORY

on May 12, 1706. At the end of the month the rebel terms were presented. Austria must abandon all sovereign rights beyond the Carpathians. The Army, finance, justice, administration, were to be the sole concern of the Hungarian assembly. Sullen, grudging recognition of the kingship of the Emperor was conceded as a matter of form. When these terms became known in Vienna the population surrounded the palace in fury against the Hungarians. "All the world," wrote the Dutch Ambassador at the Imperial Court (June 5), "is shouting 'Crucify them—crucify them!'"<sup>1</sup> All classes were clamouring to break the sworn truce. The Emperor at his parley made very generous offers. These were at once rejected by the insurgents.

The effects of Ramillies extended swiftly to this sphere. There is a quaint letter from Rakoczy to Marlborough which shows the close relationship prevailing between the rebels and the would-be conciliators:

### *Prince Rakoczy to Marlborough*

NEYHEUSEL

July 22, 1706

\* The glorious exploits which your Highness continues to perform during this war and the love which you have for liberty makes me hope that the Hungarian nation is not indifferent to you. For in truth, my Lord, the kingdom is being overwhelmed by your frequent victories. Cannot your generous heart find some means of compensating us for the sufferings which your victorious arms bring upon us. We are affected even here through the insupportable arrogance which your rapid conquests breed in the hearts of the Imperial Ministers. They become more intractable every day, in spite of the efforts of the mediators [Stepney and the Dutch envoy, Bruyninx] and of my own attempts to smooth the path of peace negotiations. I am quite persuaded, my Lord, that this conduct is by no means in accordance with the pious sentiments of Her Britannic Majesty, nor with the equitable intentions of your Highness. Thus I flatter myself the letter which I give myself the honour to write will influence your natural clemency to take us effectively under your protection.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Von Noorden, ii, 505.

<sup>2</sup> Blenheim MSS.

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The Sea Powers, impatient at the distraction of this internal struggle, still pressed for conferences. They were able to induce the Emperor to observe the truce till July 24, and urged him to continue it longer. They were still pressing conciliation upon him when Joseph I bluntly declared through all his envoys and agents that the Imperial House would rather give up Spain and Italy than Hungary and Transylvania. This was final. Apart from Eugene's exploits in Italy, the remaining effort of the Empire was now devoted to the civil war.

It was upon this adverse tide that the Margrave, Prince Louis of Baden, ended his career. The Imperial Government, ignoring his needs, sought to pay their way with the insistent Allies by hounding him to action. They pretended he had forty thousand men. He declared he had not the half, and invited them to come and count them. The offer was accepted, and the Imperial Commissioner, Count Schlick, visited the army. With his position at stake he closed his eyes to the facts, and his report was hostile. He declared the Margrave was strong enough to recover the line of the Moder, and undertake an operation in Alsace.

At this moment the Margrave's toe, which had now infected his whole leg, burst into deadly inflammation. He asked for sick leave to seek curative waters. The Emperor, in whose eyes he was now a recalcitrant and almost a mutineer, ordered his second-in-command to carry out the offensive. This was, of course, an impossible task. Thungen could only moulder till the winter came. Meanwhile the French raiding parties rode deep into Germany, harrying the circles of Swabia and Franconia.

The Margrave was now a dying man. His last letter to Marlborough contains tragic passages.

. . . I have been for several weeks so ill that I can neither concern myself with the command nor with other affairs. I do not know whether I shall ever get well—yes or no; having had no sleep for nearly three weeks. His Imperial Majesty, my master, seems unconvinced of the truth of the lists [numbers and strengths] which I have sent him about the army under my

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command. I have been made to feel in terms which are plain enough that his Majesty has received contrary accounts from his Quartermaster-General, who has assured him that this army comprises 40,000 combatants equipped with everything. As for the figures I have given, I am sure that I have not made a mistake. But for the rest of the troops, which are added in with all the equipment they are supposed to have, and for the nineteen hundred thousand odd florins, of which Count Schlick has boasted to the Elector of Mainz, at Cologne and everywhere else that he brought into these regions—of all that we know nothing in this army, having no money at all.

. . . I have been forced by his Majesty's orders to hand over to Field-Marshal Thungen charge of affairs, not doubting that the 40,000 men which the Imperial Court knows with scientific certainty are massed upon the Upper Rhine will succeed in all that is desired of them. . . . The result will clear up the whole affair; and I am only too grieved to be entirely incapable of working either with my body or my head. . . .<sup>1</sup>

On January 4, four months later, he expired in his unfinished palace at Rastadt, from grief and blood-poisoning. Thus ended the career of the famous general of the Turkish wars, a brave warrior who had long held aloft the German standard on the Rhine, but who had neither been endowed with the troops or skill to beat the French himself, nor with the magnanimity to share as a loyal subordinate the fortunes of Marlborough.

When we recount the famous victories of 1706 and set forth the long tale of captured cities and conquered or reconquered lands which built up the allied triumph, it seems amazing that all this good fortune should not have prompted the comparatively small effort of good comradeship needed to bring the war to a successful conclusion. The victories of Ramillies and Turin; the relief of Barcelona; the capture of Antwerp and a dozen famous fortresses in the Low Countries; the French expelled from Italy; Charles III entering Madrid; the complete suppression of France upon the seas and oceans—all these prepared a broad, an easy road along which the

<sup>1</sup> September 7, 1706; Blenheim MSS.



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signatory states of the Grand Alliance, who had striven so hard against misfortune, could walk to peace and plenty. But by the mysterious law which perhaps in larger interests limits human achievement, and bars or saves the world from clear-cut solutions, this second revival of the allied cause led only to a second decline. Twice now the genius of Marlborough and Eugene had lifted the weary, struggling signatory states to the level where their will could be enforced, and most of their needs secured. But again, in despite of their champions, they were to cast themselves down into peril and distress. The Empire represented nothing but moral and military decay and legal or territorial appetite. The German principalities and the strong kingdom of Prussia cast off their responsibilities and sponged for subsidies upon their Anglo-Dutch deliverers in proportion as they were relieved of their dangers. The Dutch themselves, with their Dyke at their fingertips, were "unaccountable." In Spain the incursions of the Allies, especially the Portuguese, had roused a national spirit similar to that which a hundred years later wore down Napoleon. The Hapsburg king imposed by foreign troops had become to Spanish eyes usurper and invader; while the Bourbon claimant, though more alien, seemed to embody the continuity and grandeur of the Spanish past.

In England, now the hub of this Juggernaut wheel, not only party strife, but the prejudices and failings of a handful of men and women, including and circling round the Queen, were to crack and splinter the inefficient but still august league of nations which hitherto had successfully defended the liberties of Europe against the intolerance of totalitarian monarchy. Thus success bred failure, and prosperity prepared collapse, by which again new, larger, and more painful efforts were extorted.

## CHAPTER XI

### SUNDERLAND'S APPOINTMENT

WHILE in the field Marlborough and Eugene carried 1706, all before them a series of English party and personal Autumn rivalries prepared the general reversal of fortune. Sunderland had been chosen by the Whig Junto as the thin end of the wedge by which they would force their way into the controlling circle of the Queen's Government. According to modern ideas, their majority in both Houses of Parliament gave them the right, and even at this time it gave them the power, to acquire pre-eminence in public affairs. Sunderland, admonished and guided by Marlborough, had acquitted himself with high discretion in his mission to Vienna. He had shared or adopted Marlborough's view that the Hungarian insurgents, and not the Imperial Court, were to blame for prolonging an intestine war, in view of the offers made to them by the Emperor. Whiggism comprised at this time the quintessence of aristocracy, plutocracy, and oligarchy at home, coupled with the ruthless application of Radical, Nationalist, and Republican principles abroad. Instead of fulminating these doctrines, Sunderland had judged the situation of the Empire in a matter-of-fact mood. He went to Vienna a political theorist and partisan. He had acquitted himself like a statesman facing the actual facts.

His colleagues and the tensely organized party they ruled were not at all displeased with his behaviour, and may even have recommended it. Their foresight and understanding taught them that at this phase in their party advance office was more important than principle. They must get their hands on some at least of the levers of the machine. They must work their way by all measures into the councils, and if possible the confidence, of the Queen. They now decided that their move must be to make Sunderland Secretary of State. To

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this end they combined his recent serviceable conduct, his relationship to the Marlboroughs, and their own party power in both Houses. They concentrated their assaults upon Godolphin. Politically they had him in their grip. The Lord Treasurer, hunted by the Tories upon the Scottish Act of Security and the Union, had for some time past been dependent upon Whig protection. By this means alone he had acquired the power to use martial law against Scotland at this critical juncture in the life of the two countries. Without this overriding force added to all other argument the Union could never have been achieved. But the union of the two kingdoms was a deadly blow at the hopes of a Jacobite restoration. Godolphin was led by his vision of British unity to renounce alike by his action and by his new connexions those Stuart memories which he had long illegally cherished, and which were a strange but real bond of sympathy between him and the Queen. By these sacrifices, assuredly made for no personal motive, from no weakness of character, and in what all must now regard as the long interest of the British Isles, Godolphin obtained the votes and the force to lay strong hands on Scotland and clinch the Union.

This now approached its closing stage. The Scottish Parliament had made a number of minor amendments to the original English proposals. The Union party in Scotland urged that another session of the Scottish Parliament would add to their difficulties. Therefore they requested that the English Parliament should accept the Act exactly as they had passed it. Marlborough, who was one of the Commissioners, regarded the Union as vital to the strength of the nation. From the camp at Helchin he had written in the summer (August 9) :

What you say of both parties is so true that I do, with all my soul, pity you. Care must be taken against the malice of the angry party ; and notwithstanding their malicious affectation of crying the Church may be ruined by the union, the union must be supported ; and I hope the reasonable men of the other party will not oppose the enlarging of the bottom, so that it may be able to support itself. . . .

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I had last night the honour of yours of the 13th, and am very glad to find that the commission has so unanimously agreed. I do with all my heart wish the Parliament of both nations may do the same, so that her Majesty may have the glory of finishing this great work, for which she will not only deserve to be blessed in this, but also in future ages.<sup>1</sup>

It was in fact the supreme object in domestic politics to which he and Godolphin bent all their power. When in 1707 the Act was finally passed Guenin, the French agent, wrote from London (January 18) :

This Union gives much satisfaction to the Treasurer and the Duke of Marlborough. The latter has really done more than anyone to put it through, although he has not seemed to have played much part in it.<sup>2</sup>

But the Lord Treasurer, who had long lost all hold upon the Tories and had only a temporary working agreement with the Whigs, now found himself in daily contact with a highly discontented Queen. Anne's thoughts strayed often to the "young man in France." "Maybe 'tis our brother." She knew—every one knew—he was her brother. She would not give up the throne to him, even had she the power to do so. She would fight to the last against it. But was she bound to ensure the succession to the house of Hanover she detested so cordially? And to the very prince who had insulted her maiden charms? This Act of Union which her trusted friends the General and the Treasurer pressed upon her forced her to rob James of almost his only remaining hope—the crown of Scotland. Perhaps it must be so. What could she do, one woman among these domineering statesmen with their passions, their intense personalities, their fierce rivalries, their massive arguments? She thought it was necessary to bring about the Union. It was right and wise ; it was her duty ; but she was not in the mood at any moment to rejoice in that duty. Her heart did not warm to those, even her most trusted friends and proved, sagacious guides, who held her so firmly to her task. Mr Freeman was at the

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 145.

<sup>2</sup> French Foreign Office Archives, tome 221, f. 48 v.

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wars—he was always at the wars. She was deeply conscious of the glory and power with which his sword had invested her reign. But Mr Montgomery—she did not often call him that now—was pressing her too hard. He had not the same claim to her favour. Anyone can be a Minister. All her ablest subjects were seeking, contriving, and conspiring to be Ministers. He asked too much. After all, he hung only by a thread which she could cut ; but perhaps she hung by that same thread herself. Thus the Queen.

We can see how extremely hazardous was the Lord Treasurer's position. A false step in his personal relations with the Queen on his part, an emotional crisis on hers, and he would see himself delivered to the competitive fury of both bitter factions. In the autumn of 1706 Godolphin seemed to foreign eyes to have gained a position of immense security, unrivalled by any statesman in Europe. But in fact, at the very moment when, in spite of endless war, the finances flourished under his skilful, honest administration, when his great colleague had conquered the Netherlands, when Eugene, upon whom he had lavished money and men, was chasing the French from Italy, when the Scottish Parliament bowed to the inevitable union, Godolphin felt himself in awful jeopardy, and almost without a friend. Almost—but there was one friend, an old friend, the greatest man alive, whom he knew he could count upon till death. He was sure that Marlborough would never desert him ; and thus he persevered, and with his perseverance grew the unity of Britain and her power among the nations.

It was in the situation which we have thus briefly outlined that Godolphin was now subjected to the extreme pressure of the Whigs. Sunderland must be Secretary of State. They asked nothing more ; they would take nothing else ; and now was the moment. Let him pay the price, let him extort the price from the Queen, and all would be well. The skilful Whig politicians would shield him from any reproaches about his past. They even sent a Member to the Tower for insinuating that he had corresponded with Saint-Germains. Great Whig orators and famous ex-Ministers



SIDNEY, EARL OF GODOLPHIN  
From a copy of a painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*National Portrait Gallery*



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would produce substantial majorities for his defence, for his policy, for the support of Marlborough's armies, and for the insatiable prosecution of the war. On their broad shoulders, in their competent hands, he and all the causes he believed in could rest; and the General overseas would ride on to the decisive defeat of France and the lasting greatness of England. Otherwise they would paralyse the Government and break Godolphin in pieces. This they imparted to him with many bows and scrapes during the summer of 1706.

Accordingly Godolphin, under remorseless pressure, and having, as he said, "no other bottom [than the Whigs] to stand on," addressed himself to Queen Anne. He directed upon her the forces to which he was himself subjected. He added all that long friendship, faithful service, and his personal ascendancy could command. It is astonishing that most of our native historians have depicted Queen Anne as an obstinate simpleton, a stupid, weak creature, in the hands of her bedchamber women; and that it should have been left to foreign writers to expose her immense powers of will-power, resistance, and manœuvre. She fought a harder fight than Godolphin. On her throne she was as tough as Marlborough in the field. She would not have Sunderland—she could not bear him. He was, she felt, a brazen freethinker, and at heart a Republican. The Queen, the embodiment of Church and Monarchy, recognized in him, as she conceived the case, her true foe. Was he not the vanguard of those "tyrant lords" who, as she saw truly, meant to force themselves and their nominees into her Government in order to rule the land and, if they could, Europe. But the Whigs continued to make it clear to Godolphin that he must either compel the Queen to make Sunderland Secretary of State or face the immediate inveterate hostility of both Houses of Parliament. Accordingly all means were employed to persuade the Queen. Godolphin enlisted the vigorous advocacy of Sarah. He himself tried his utmost, exposing his difficulties and threatening resignation. The Queen used every art; she appealed to his friendship, to his loyalty and chivalry. But what could he do? He could not resign and abandon Marlborough.



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He could not carry on the government unless he forced Sunderland upon the Queen. That she was wrong on the merits of the situation and making needless trouble may be admitted without detracting from the personal quality which she displayed.

Sarah also was, of course, made use of by the Whigs to press Sunderland upon the Queen. Both as a Whig and as a mother-in-law she was by no means reluctant to do this. She immediately encountered an impenetrable resistance. The Queen affected to regard her advocacy as the natural expression of family interests. Evidently there must have been awkward conversations. Sarah was at pains to assert that her zeal for Sunderland had nothing to do with his being her daughter's husband. In fact, however, Anne would have been more tolerant of this motive than of Sarah's Whig partisanship. We notice immediately signs that the Queen took offence at her Mistress of the Robes meddling in high politics. She used much less patient processes with her old intimate confidante than with her Lord Treasurer. She reasoned with Godolphin; she repulsed Sarah. The following notable correspondence ensued :

### *Sarah to the Queen*

August 1706

I conclude your Majesty will believe my arguments upon this subject proceed chiefly from the partiality which I may have for my Lord Sunderland, tho' I solemnly protest that I never had any for any person, to the prejudice of what I believed your interest. And I had rather he had any other place, or none at all, if the party that most assist you would be satisfied without it ; for, besides the very great trouble of that office, executed as it should be, he is not of a humour to get anything by such an employment ; and I wish from my soul that any other man had been proposed to you, that you could not have suspected I had any concern for. But 'tis certain that your Government can't be carried on with a part of the Tories, and the Whigs disoblged, who, when that happens, will join with any people to torment you and those that are your true servants. I am sure it is my interest, as well as inclination, to have you succeed by any sort

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of men in what is just, and that will prevent what has been done from being thrown away. Your security and the nation's is my chief wish, and I beg of God Almighty, as sincerely as I shall do for His pardon at my last hour, that Mr and Mrs Morley may see their errors as to this *notion* before it is too late ; but considering how little impression anything makes that comes from your faithful Freeman, I have troubled you too much, and I beg your pardon for it.<sup>1</sup>

We have italicized the word " *notion*," because the Queen read it as " *nation*," and so took it as a general charge of high disrespect. She left the letter unanswered for some time. Sarah had never experienced such treatment before. She made inquiries and learned that her letter had offended the Queen. She was quite at a loss to know why. Indeed, she was indignant.

### *Sarah to the Queen*

August 30 [1706]

Your Majesty's great indifference and contempt in taking no notice of my last letter did not so much surprise me as to hear my Lord Treasurer say you had complained much of it, which makes me presume to give you this trouble to repeat what I can be very positive was the whole aim of the letter, and I believe very near the words. It was, in the first place, to show the reason why I had not waited on your Majesty, believing you were uneasy, and fearing you might think I had some private concern for my lord Sunderland. I therefore thought it necessary to assure your Majesty that I had none so great as for your service, and to see my Lord Treasurer so mortified at the necessity of quitting it, or being the ruin of that and himself together. Then I took the liberty to show, as well as I could, that it was really no hardship nor unkindness to Sir Charles Hedges ; and I think I might have added, though I believe I did not, that your Majesty, to carry on your government, must have men that neither herd with your enemies nor that are in themselves insignificant. At last I concluded, if I am not more mistaken than ever I was in my life, with these following words, that I did pray to God Almighty, with as much earnestness as I should at my last day for the saving of my soul, that Mrs and Mr Morley might see their errors. This

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 111.

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is the whole sense of the letter ; and, having had the honour to know your Majesty when you had other thoughts of me than you are pleased to have now, and when you did think fit to take advice and information, I could not reasonably imagine that you should be offended at my earnest endeavours to serve you, and pray that you nor the prince might not be deceived. But, finding that no proofs nor demonstrations of my faithfulness to your interest can make anything agreeable to your Majesty that comes from me, I will not enlarge on this subject. I will only beg one piece of justice, and that I fancy you would not refuse to anybody, if you believed it one, that you will show my Lord Treasurer the letter of which your Majesty has complained ; and I wish from the bottom of my heart that he, or anybody that is faithful to you and the prince, could see every word that ever I writ to your Majesty in my life.<sup>1</sup>

On this the Queen opened the matter to Godolphin, and pointed to the phrase "errors as to this *nation*." Godolphin told Sarah, and Sarah made it clear that she had written "*notion*." This disposed of the grievance, but the Queen's answer contained a phrase of challenge certainly not warranted by anything Sarah had written.

### *The Queen to Sarah*

Friday morning  
[September 4, 1706]

Since my dear Mrs Freeman could imagine my not taking notice of her letter that was writ before she went to St Albans, proceeded from indifference or contempt, what will she think of my not answering her other in another week's time ? But I do assure you it was neither of the reasons you mention that hindered me from writing, *nor no other* <sup>2</sup> but the concern I have been in since the change of the Secretary was proposed to me. *I have obeyed your commands* in showing your letter to my Lord Treasurer, and find my complaint was not without some ground, and a mistake anybody might make upon the first reading ; for you had made an *a* instead of an *o*, which quite altered the word. I am very sensible all you say proceeds from the concern you have for my service, and it is impossible to be more mortified than I am to see my Lord Treasurer in such uneasiness ; and his leaving my

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 112-113.

<sup>2</sup> The Queen's italics.

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service is a thought I cannot bear, and I hope in God he will put all such out of his own mind. Now that you are come hither again, I hope you will not go to Woodstock without giving me one look, for whatever hard thoughts you may have of me, I am sure I do not deserve them, and I will not be uneasy if you come to me ; for though you are never so unkind, I will ever preserve a most sincere and tender passion for my dear Mrs Freeman.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah's reply (September 5), although well suited to an argument with a Cabinet colleague, reads in the circumstances as the height of tactlessness. Instead of fastening on the gracious ending of the Queen's letter, and going to see her in a mood of clouds dispersed, she plunged into a conscientious recapitulation of her arguments.

By the letter I had from your Majesty this morning, and the great weight you put upon the difference betwixt the word notion and nation in my letter, I am only made sensible (as by many other things) that you were in a great disposition to complain of me, since to this moment I cannot for my life see any essential difference betwixt these two words, as to the sense of my letter. . . .

. . . If you can find fault with this, I am so unhappy as that you must always find fault with me, for I am incapable of thinking otherwise as long as I am alive, or of acting now but upon the same principle that I served you before you came to the crown for so many years, when your unlimited favour and kindness to me could never tempt me to make use of it in one single instance that was not for your interest and service. . . .

She proceeded with several pages of admonition to the Queen, and disparagement of Sir Charles Hedges, the threatened Secretary of State, and ended, "I beg your Majesty's pardon for not waiting upon you, and I persuade myself that, long as my letter is, it will be less troublesome to your Majesty."<sup>2</sup>

These letters show how far the mischief had gone between Sarah and the Queen. The Duchess made a profound mistake in supposing that she could convince her mistress by argument or compel her by remonstrance, when she could no longer persuade her by love.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 114-115.

<sup>2</sup> *Conduct*, pp. 165-170.

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Marlborough was from the first averse to the appointment of Sunderland. He did not like him much as a son-in-law. He did not agree with him as a politician. He learned with misgivings of the efforts of the Whigs. He did not share Sarah's party feeling. He thought her imprudent to put herself forward in the matter. He would certainly have disapproved of her procedure. Still, at the request of Godolphin he joined in the concerted appeal to the Queen. He wrote his mind bluntly to Sarah.

*John to Sarah*

HELCHIN  
August 9, 1706

You know that I have often disputes with you concerning the Queen ; and, by what I have always observed, when she thinks herself in the right, she needs no advice to help her to be very firm and positive. But I doubt but a very little time will set this of Lord Sunderland very right, for . . . she has a good opinion of him. I have writ as my friends would have me, for I had much rather be governed than govern. But otherwise I have really so much esteem and kindness to him, and have so much knowledge of the place you would have for him that I have my apprehensions he will be very uneasy in it ; and that, when it is too late, you will be of my opinion, that it would have been much happier if he had been employed in any other place of profit and honour. I have formerly said so much to you on this subject, and to so little purpose, that I ought not now to have troubled you with all this, knowing very well that you rely on other people's judgment in this matter. I do not doubt but they wish him very well ; but in this they have other considerations than his good, and I have none but that of a kind friend that would neither have him nor my daughter uneasy. Writing this by candle light, I am so blind that I cannot read it, so that if there be anything in it that should not be seen, burn it, and think kindly of one who loves you with all his heart.<sup>1</sup>

As the dispute deepened he became more concerned. Amid the ceaseless exertions of commanding an army, the marches, the sieges, the trenches, the sluices, gunpowder,

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 89-90.

## SUNDERLAND'S APPOINTMENT

Vendôme, and the Dutch, he became acutely conscious of the dangerous disputes now rising to intensity at home. In the fullness of his military success he felt the foundations of his power being sapped and undermined. He resented being forced to turn his eyes from the enemy in a great campaign to the petty, but at the same time poisonous, intrigues at home. At times he gave way to despondency.

*John to Sarah*

HILCHIN  
September

What you write me concerning the Queen and the Lord Treasurer gives me a great deal of trouble ; for should the consequence be what you say, that there is no relying upon the Tories, and that the Whigs will be out of humour, it must end in confusion, which will have the consequence of the Dutch making peace with France. I am afraid this is what will gratify many of the Tory Party; but I can see no advantage that can come to the Whigs by the ruin of the Lord Treasurer ; so that I hope they are too wise a people to expose themselves and the liberties of Europe, because some things are not done with a good grace. I would not have you mistake me ; for as far as it is in my power, for the sake of my country and the Queen, for whom, had I a thousand lives, I would venture them all, I would have everything that is reasonable done to satisfy the Whigs, of which I think the Lord Treasurer is the best judge.

If it were not for my duty to the Queen, and friendship to Lord Treasurer, I should beg that somebody else might execute my office. Not that I take anything ill, but that the weight is too great for me, and I find a decay in my memory. Whatever may be told you of my looks, the greatest part of my hair is grey, but I think I am not quite so lean as I was.<sup>1</sup>

At some moment in this quarrel we have a letter from Godolphin to the Queen, which is poignant when the circumstances are remembered. The Treasurer was, with Marlborough, the head of a Government which was dazzling Europe by its triumphs in the field and achieving the Union of Great Britain. The Queen was being carried forward by

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 96.

## MARLBOROUGH

her Ministers to a world eminence to which none of her predecessors had attained. Yet in this autumn of the year of victory Godolphin was forced to write :

### *Godolphin to the Queen*

*Saturday morning, at nine*  
[August 31, 1706]<sup>1</sup>

I come this moment from opening and reading the letter which your Majesty gave yourself the trouble to write to me last night. It gives me all the grief and despair imaginable to find that your Majesty shows inclination to have me continue in your service, and yet will make it impossible for me to do so. I shall not therefore trouble your Majesty with fruitless repetitions of reasons and arguments. I cannot struggle against the difficulties of your Majesty's business and yourself at the same time ; but I can keep my word to your Majesty.

I have no house in the world to go to, but my house at Newmarket, which I must own is not at this time like to be a place of much retirement ; but I have no other. I have worn out my health, and almost my life, in the service of the Crown. I have served your Majesty faithfully to the best of my understanding, without any advantage to myself, except the honour of doing so, or without expecting any other favour than to end the small remainder of my days in liberty and quiet.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that Godolphin was at the end of his resources. He longed to quit. Marlborough alone sustained him.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

VILAINÉ  
September 9

In yours of the 20th you say it would be an ease to you to retire from business, the weight of which you cannot bear, if you are not allowed some assistance. I hope the Queen will do everything for your ease but that of parting with you, in which, should you have a serious thought, you could not justify yourself to God or man ; for without flattery, as England is divided, there is nobody that can execute your place but yourself.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Queen's letter dated August 30 is in Add. MSS. 41340/1.

<sup>2</sup> Cox, iii, 92-93.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

## SUNDERLAND'S APPOINTMENT

And from Grametz on September 16:

. . . I am positively of the opinion that should you quit the service of the Queen, you would not only disturb the affairs of England, but also the liberties of Europe; so that I conjure you not to have a thought of quitting till we have obtained a good peace; and then I hope the Queen's interest may be so well settled that she may allow of our living quietly. But as the affairs of Europe and those of the Queen in particular are at this time, I think both you and I are in conscience and honour bound to undergo all the dangers and troubles that is possible to bring this war to a happy end, which I think must be after the next campaign, if we can agree to carry it on with vigour.<sup>1</sup>

Finally: "Allow me to give you this assurance, that as I know you to be a sincere, honest man, may God bless me as I shall be careful *that whatever man is your enemy shall never be my friend.*"<sup>2</sup>

With the personal stresses at this height the Queen suffered as much as anyone. Towards the end of September she proposed a compromise to Godolphin. It was a hard thing, she said, to remove Sir Charles Hedges, and

I can never look upon it other ways. As to my other difficulties concerning Lord Sunderland, I do fear for the reasons I have told you we shall never agree long together; and the making him Secretary, I can't help thinking, is throwing myself into the hands of a party. They desire this thing to be done, because else they say they can't answer that all their friends will go along with them this winter. If this be complied with, you will then, in a little time, find they must be gratified in something else, or they will not go on heartily in my business. You say yourself they will need my authority to assist them, which I take to be the bringing more of their friends into employment, and shall I not then be in their hands? If this is not being in the hands of a party, what is? I am as sensible as anybody can be of the services Lord Sunderland and all his friends have done me, and am very willing to show I am so, by doing anything they desire that is reasonable. Let me therefore beg of you once more to consider of the expedient I proposed, of bringing Lord Sunderland

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 97-98.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.



## MARLBOROUGH

into the Cabinet council, with a pension, till some vacancy happens.

When I mentioned this before, I remember your objection against it was that so young a man taken into the Cabinet council, without having any post, might look more like an imposition upon me than a desire of my own. Maybe some people may find this fault; but I confess I can but think if he was made Secretary, others would say *that* were also an imposition upon me. One of these things would make me very easy, the other quite contrary; and why, for God's sake, may I not be gratified as well as other people? . . . If they are not satisfied with so reasonable a thing as this, it is very plain, in my poor opinion, nothing will satisfy them but having one entirely in their power.

This is a thing I have so much at my heart and upon which the quiet of my life depends that I must beg you, for Christ Jesus' sake, to endeavour to bring it about. I know very well that you do not serve for advantage or ambition, but with entire duty and affection, which makes me that I cannot bear the thoughts of parting with you; and I hope, after what the Duke of Marlborough has said to you, you will not think of it again, for to use his words, "you cannot answer it neither to God nor man, but are obliged both in conscience and honour not to do it." Let his words plead for her who will be lost and undone if you pursue this cruel intention.<sup>1</sup>

No one would have been more happy than Godolphin had it been in his power to accept this offer which had cost the Queen much to make. But the Whigs were inexorable. They had made what they considered a just and moderate claim. All had subscribed, and none would recede from it. They could hardly sympathize with the Queen's repugnance to them. The Treasurer's troubles were his own affair. As for Marlborough, surely his beloved wife spoke for him, and she was as keen as any. Thus they held to their demand.

Godolphin's misery presents itself vividly after two centuries. He could not bear to coerce the Queen. Wrong though she was, every loyalty in his nature revolted against the task. Well might he long for Newmarket, compared to

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 104-106.

## SUNDERLAND'S APPOINTMENT

such an odious duty. But Marlborough, British interests, and the allied cause would not let him go. This chivalrous, disinterested man, inspired by deep reverence for the Crown and by devotion to the Queen, wearied by so many years of service in four reigns, had now to compel the Queen to accept an intruder whom he himself distrusted, at the demand of a party with whom he had no tie save procuring the money votes for the war. Those who envy the glitter of great office are usually unseared by such ordeals. Godolphin remained to force Sunderland upon the Queen at the cost of his life's friendship with her.

Finding nothing but despairing resistance from her Treasurer, Anne, obstinate to the end, knowing what he thought of the Whigs, regarding him but as their mechanical tool, finally appealed to Marlborough.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

September 10, 1706

. . . I have been considering the business we have so often spoke about ever since I saw you, and cannot but continue of the same mind that it is a great hardship to persuade anybody to part with a place they are in possession of, in hopes of another that is not yet vacant. Besides I must own freely to you I am of the opinion that making a party man Secretary of State, when there are so many of their friends in employment of all kinds already, is throwing myself into the hands of a party, which is a thing I have been desirous to avoid. Maybe some may think I would be willing to be in the hands of the Tories ; but whatever people may say of me, I do assure you I am not inclined, nor never will be, to employ any of those violent persons that have behaved themselves so ill towards me. All I desire is my liberty in encouraging and employing all those that concur faithfully in my service, whether they are called Whigs or Tories, not to be tied to one, nor the other ; for if I should be so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of either, I shall not imagine myself, though I have the name of queen, to be in reality but their slave, which as it will be my personal ruin, so it will be the destroying all government ; for instead of putting an end to faction, it will lay a lasting foundation for it.

## MARLBOROUGH

You press the bringing Lord Sunderland into business, that there may be one of that party in a place of trust, to help carry on the business this winter ; and you think if this is not complied with, they will not be hearty in pursuing my service in the Parliament. But is it not very hard that men of sense and honour will not promote the good of their country, because everything in the world is not done that they desire ! when they may be assured Lord Sunderland shall come into employment as soon as it is possible. *Why, for God's sake, must I, who have no interest, no end, no thought, but for the good of my country, be made so miserable as to be brought into the power of one set of men ? and why may not I be trusted, since I mean nothing but what is equally for the good of all my subjects ?*

There is another apprehension I have of Lord Sunderland being Secretary, which I think is a natural one, which proceeds from what I have heard of his temper. I am afraid he and I should not agree long together, finding by experience my humour and those that are of a warmer will often have misunderstandings between one another. I could say a great deal more on this subject, but fear I have been too tedious already. Therefore I shall conclude, begging you to consider how to bring me out of my difficulties, and never leave my service, for Jesus Christ's sake ; for besides the reasons I give you in another letter, this is a blow I cannot bear.<sup>1</sup>

No one reading this able, powerful State paper can doubt the reality of the part played by Queen Anne. Marlborough allowed nearly a month to pass before he rejected this appeal of his sovereign and benefactress.

### *Marlborough to the Queen*

October 7, 1706

As I am persuaded that the safety of your government and the quiet of your life depend very much upon the resolution you shall take at this time, I think myself bound in gratitude, duty, and conscience to let you know my mind freely ; and that you may not suspect me of being partial, I take leave to assure you, in the presence of God, that I am not for your putting yourself into the hands of either party. But the behaviour of Lord Rochester, and

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 90-92.

## SUNDERLAND'S APPOINTMENT

all the hotheads of that party, is so extravagant that there is no doubt to be made of their exposing you and the liberties of England to the rage of France rather than not be revenged, as they call it. This being the case, there is a necessity, as well as justice in your following your inclinations in supporting Lord Treasurer, or all must go to confusion. As the humour is at present, he can't be supported but by the Whigs, for the others seek his destruction, which in effect is yours. Now pray consider, if he can, by placing some few about you, gain such a confidence as shall make your business and himself safe, will not this be the sure way of making him so strong that he may hinder your being forced into a party? I beg you will believe I have no other motive to say what I do, but my zeal for your person and friendship for a man whom I know to be honest and zealously faithful to you.<sup>1</sup>

Still the Queen resisted both Marlborough's advice and Godolphin's despair. Still the Whigs demanded their rights.

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

GRAMETZ  
October 12

This has given me some trouble, but nothing of what I now feel by a letter I have received this morning from the Duchess, concerning the temper and resolutions of the Whigs, by which I see all things like to go to confusion. Yours of the same date mentions nothing of it, which makes me fear you have taken your resolution, which if it be to retire I must lay the consequence before you, which is that certainly the Dutch will make their peace, which will be of fatal consequence, especially considering the advantages we now have; for in all probability one year's war more would give ease to all Christendom for many years.<sup>2</sup>

And again, on the 14th :

You will have seen by my last how uneasy I was at some news I have heard from England. I shall continue so till I have your thoughts on that matter; for my trouble proceeds from my friendship to you, and my duty to the Queen. *For the consequences of what may happen to the rest of Europe, mankind must and will struggle for their own safety*; and for myself, I shall be

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 100-101.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

## MARLBOROUGH

happier in a retired life, when I have the Queen's and your leave for it.<sup>1</sup>

To Sarah he showed a sombre resolution.

CAMBRON  
October 18

. . . I hope you will order it so that after I have been some days at London we may go to the lodge and be quiet, for I am quite weary of the world ; and since I am afraid there is a necessity of my serving in this country as long as this war lasts, let me have a little more quiet in England than I have been used to have, and then I shall be the better able to go through what I must endure in this country ; for upon the success we have had this year, our friends grow less governable than when they were afraid of the French. . . .

As I have no farther prospect of doing any more service to the public this campaign but that of putting Courtray in a condition, every day is very tedious ; and for the two or three days I shall be at Brussels I shall be torn to pieces, there being twenty pretenders to every place that must be given ; for I have not been able to prevail with the Deputies to declare them before my arrival, which would have given me ease.

I have already more than once writ my mind very freely, so that my conscience is at ease, though my mind is very far from it ; for I did flatter myself that my zeal and sincerity for the Queen were so well known to her that my representations would have had more weight than I find they have. *But nothing can ever hinder me from being ready to lay down my life when she can think it for her service ; for I serve [her] with an entire affection, as well as the utmost duty ; for you and I, and all ours, would be the most ungrateful people that ever lived if we did not venture all for her good. By this, do not mistake me ; for I am very sensible that if my Lord Treasurer be obliged to retire, I cannot serve in the Ministry.* But when these projectors have put all in confusion, I shall then readily not only venture my life, but all that I have, to show my gratitude. When the express comes by which I shall see all that has passed, I shall once more write, as becomes me, and will yet hope it may have its effect ; if not, God's will be done.<sup>2</sup>

And a few days later in response to her Whig girdings :

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-117.

## SUNDERLAND'S APPOINTMENT

I have had the good luck to deserve better from all Englishmen than to be suspected of not being in the true interest of my country, which I am in, and ever will be, without being of a faction; and this principle shall govern me for the little remainder of my life. I must not think of being popular, but I shall have the satisfaction of going to my grave with the opinion of having acted as became an honest man; and if I have your esteem and love I shall think myself entirely happy.

. . . Since the resolution is taken to vex and ruin the Lord Treasurer, because the Queen has not complied with what was desired for Lord Sunderland, I shall from henceforth despise all mankind, and think there is no such thing as virtue; for I know with what zeal the Lord Treasurer has pressed the Queen in that matter. I do pity him, and shall love him as long as I live, and never will be a friend to any that can be his enemy.

I have writ my mind very freely to the Queen on this occasion, so that, whatever misfortune may happen, I shall have a quiet mind, having done what I thought my duty. And as for the resolution of making me uneasy, I believe they will not have much pleasure in that, for as I have not set my heart on having justice done me, I shall not be disappointed, nor will I be ill-used by any man.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah forwarded the first of these letters to the Queen.

### *Sarah to the Queen*

*Sunday morning, October 20, 1706*

I must in the first place beg leave to remind you of the name of Mrs Morley, and of your faithful Freeman, because without that help I shall not be well able to bring out what I have to say. . . . I will tell you the greatest truths in the world, which seldom succeed with anybody so well as flattery. Ever since I received the enclosed letter from Mr Freeman I have been in dispute with myself whether I should send it to Mrs Morley or not, because his opinion is no news to you, and after the great discouragements I have met with only for being faithful to you, I concluded it was no manner of purpose to trouble you any more. But, reading the letter over and over, and finding he is convinced he must quit Mrs Morley's service if she will not be made sensible of the condition she is in, I have at last resolved to send it you;

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 101-102.

## MARLBOROUGH

and you will see by it how full of gratitude Mr Freeman is by his expressions, which were never meant for Mrs Morley to see. He is resolved to venture his life and fortune, whenever it can be of any use to you, and upon recalling everything to my memory that may fill my heart with all that passion and tenderness I had once for Mrs Morley I do solemnly protest I think I can no ways return what I owe her so well as by being plain and honest.

The sting was in the tail: "*As one mark of it, I desire you would reflect whether you have never heard that the greatest misfortunes that have ever happened to any of your family had not been occasioned by having ill-advice and an obstinacy in their tempers.*"<sup>1</sup> Anyone can see the harm that this would do. It probably destroyed the whole effect of Marlborough's moving words. What pleasure could the Queen derive from such a friend? What patience could survive such endless intimate assaults, what love such endless candour?

Marlborough put the practical point with deep respect but uncommon bluntness.

### *Marlborough to the Queen*

CAMBRON  
October 24

. . . The Lord Treasurer assures me that any other measures but those he has proposed must ruin your business, and oblige him to quit his staff, which would be a great trouble to him, and I am afraid will have the fatal consequence of putting you into the hands of a party, which God only knows how you would then be able to get out of it. It is true that your reign has been so manifestly blessed by God that one might reasonably think you might govern without making use of the heads of either party, but as it might be easy to yourself. This might be practicable if both parties sought your favour, as in reason and duty they ought. But, madam, the truth is that the heads of one party have declared against you and your government, as far as it is possible, without going into open rebellion. Now, *should Your Majesty disoblige the others, how is it possible to obtain near five millions for carrying on the war with vigour, without which all is undone.*

. . . As I would in return for your many favours die to make you and your Government easy, makes me take the

<sup>1</sup> Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, viii, 163.

## SUNDERLAND'S APPOINTMENT

liberty, with all submission on my knees, to beg for your own sake, the good of your country, and all the liberties of Europe, that you would not lose one day in giving the Lord Treasurer that necessary assistance he thinks proper, for carrying on of your business in Parliament, by which you will not only enable him to make your business go well, but also that of governing the only party that can be made use of. I am very confident the Lord Treasurer thinks he shall be able to govern them to your satisfaction, or he would not say so much as he does ; and as for myself, I beg your Majesty's justice in believing that I shall take all the care I can to make them sensible of the obligations they have to you, so that you may never have reason to repent the measures, I hope in God, you will now take.<sup>1</sup>

Thus deprived of her last hope, the Queen gave way. Many strongholds fell as the result of Ramillies ; many dangers to the Grand Alliance passed away. The power of England mounted in the world. The union with Scotland was sealed. But more difficult to pluck than any of the other fruits of victory was the appointment of Sunderland. There is no doubt that an immense volume of English opinion supported the Queen in her resolves to have a national rather than a party Administration. The bitterness and ambitions of both factions were dreaded by all outside their ranks. The extreme politics of either would throw the whole country into turmoil. But this was not the case that had yet arisen. It was an extremely modest request for a party which dominated both branches of the Legislature and represented half of the nation that one of their members should have high executive office. The issue was in fact painfully simple : Anne was a Stuart, and England was ungovernable except by Parliament.

For four months the Queen had withstood all her advisers as well as the broad facts of politics. It was now the end of October. The meeting of Parliament approached, when even Stuarts must face realities. Yet it was not till December 3 that Sunderland received Hedges' seals as Secretary of State. He shared that office with Harley, who had hitherto

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 117-119.



## MARLBOROUGH

been a deeply attentive spectator. The Whigs had gained their point; they were jubilant, discreet, and helpful. They had, to use terms which in those days were familiar to the educated world, captured the counterscarp and entered the covered way. They paused, as the Queen had so clearly foreseen, only to regather their forces for a more decisive assault. The casualties were grievous. The loyalties of the Cockpit circle were destroyed. The friendship between Anne and Sarah was finally ruptured. Godolphin's favour had withered. Only Marlborough, resplendent in the field, vital to every party and to every combination, still preserved a solid claim in the Queen's regard; and even here there was a change. The Whig Junto observed these losses, and bore them stoically. They fell upon others. But this was not the end.

Where should the Queen turn? She was amazed that her old friends should use her thus. Surely they might be contented with their great commands and offices, and with the favour and affection she had shown them. Why must they force this obnoxious Whig into her circle? Was there no one who would stand by her? Such a one undoubtedly there was. We have seen how Harley had felt uncomfortable since the results of the 1705 election had produced a Whig Parliament. It must be emphasized that his attitude in these early stages of the quarrel was reasonable, consistent, and sincere. His admiration for Marlborough, though often fulsomely expressed, was genuine. On the main issues he agreed with the Marlborough-Godolphin policy. With his unrivalled Parliamentary knowledge, he understood every move in the Whig game. He did not mean to become their prisoner. Not for him the plight of Godolphin, who now had no party whom he could join or to whom he could make his way back. Never would he put himself at the mercy of the Whigs. Never would he break the ties which joined him to the Tories. Neither would he separate himself from that considerable body of Tory moderates who had followed him so faithfully, and had proved of invaluable support to the Government. The intrusion of Sunderland might be

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accepted; but if it was, as seemed to him certain, only the first step to general Whig supremacy, he would oppose the process at every stage.

Anne therefore found in her Secretary of State a very able Minister, admittedly master of House of Commons politics, who spontaneously sympathized with her feelings and took her view. When she talked with Godolphin everything ran against the grain. When she talked with Harley she felt he understood her distress, and she was fortified in her convictions by the vast knowledge and good sense of this admirable servant. Godolphin vexed her. Harley soothed her. To consult with the Treasurer became a duty. To consult with the Secretary of State became a relief.

Harley was not at this stage disloyal to Godolphin, nor did he encourage the Queen to resist his advice. But swiftly and surely there grew up between him and the Queen an easy, confidential relation. It was impossible that this should be lost upon Godolphin. Harassed with the uphill work he had to do, and with the latent insecurities of his own position, he was not unnaturally suspicious of his powerful colleague, renowned for craft. He could not fail to understand that but for Marlborough—there was his rock—he would have been supplanted. To resign is one thing, to be forced out another. The relations of the two Ministers became less cordial. They were soon to become bleak. It was but a step from a perfectly just appreciation of the facts for Godolphin to believe that Harley was adding to his difficulties with the Queen, and seeking to oust him from her favour by intrigue. Nor was this further conclusion long to be untrue. Less than a year had to pass before Harley became Godolphin's rival and foe.

Nevertheless Harley in the autumn of 1706 had no reason to reproach himself. He believed his views were right. He was sure the war could not be carried on except with the support of the moderate Tories. Let the Government once fall into the hands of the Whigs and there would be an end to national unity upon the war. The Tories,

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banned from office, would be openly and wholeheartedly a peace party. Harley was the first English statesman to systematize his contacts with public opinion. He had, as we have seen, a regular staff, including men as brilliant as Defoe, who moved continually about the country, and reported to him what they heard and saw. He learned—and he did not hide his knowledge from the Queen—that there was much war-weariness beneath the surface. Nothing, of course, could stand against glorious episodes like Ramillies and Turin. At any moment in the campaigning season these tremendous generals might produce some prodigy, and all men would follow their triumphal car. Therefore it was necessary to proceed with all propriety and prudence. But if, which God forbid, misfortune overtook the arms of the Allies, or a cannon-ball cut off the Captain-General's head instead of that of his equerry, the peace party, which was the Tory Party, would become very powerful. It must not lack a responsible leader. Surely all this ran along the high road of public duty. If the Queen began to like him better than she did the Treasurer, was it for him, in these days when favour was so much, to complain of it?

Parliament did not meet till December. By that time the Parliament of Scotland had carried the decisive article of the Treaty of Union adopting the Hanoverian succession. Thus fortified, the English Cabinet could plan the session around the final Act which ratified and solemnized the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The Whigs, squared by Sunderland's appointment, made haste to prove what their friendship was worth. The Queen's Speech was for war to such a finish that "it shall no longer be at the pleasure of any prince to disturb the repose, and endanger the liberties, of this part of the world." Both Houses acclaimed these sentiments. In unanimous addresses they declared their gratitude to the Queen for her conduct of national affairs, their joy at the glories of the campaign, and their admiration for the achievements of the Duke of Marlborough. To back words with

## SUNDERLAND'S APPOINTMENT

deeds, the Commons proceeded forthwith to vote the unprecedented Army and Navy supply of six million pounds for the hearty prosecution of the war. When Queen Anne went down to the House of Lords to give her assent to these startling Money Bills the Speaker said, on submitting them to her, "As in the glorious victory of Ramillies it was so surprising that the battle was fought before it could be thought that the armies were in the field, so it was no less surprising that the Commons had granted supplies to her Majesty before her enemies could well know that her Parliament was sitting."<sup>1</sup>

The opposition of the irreconcilable Tories did not venture to show its head until the stage of details was reached. It asserted its vitality upon a supplementary estimate for the overspending of nearly a million pounds in the previous year, largely upon the payment of the German contingents with which Prince Eugene had conquered Italy. The Whig leaders allowed this debate to develop before they declared their position, in order no doubt to keep Godolphin alive to his dependence upon them. On this occasion Harley intervened dramatically. Although so ill that he had been bled the day before, he came down to the House to defend the treaties which had led to the excess expenditure. In his final words he craved leave to withdraw from the debate because of his weakness. He did not know, he said, whether he would recover from his illness. If not, he asked for an inscription on his tomb that he was one of those who had advised the Queen to spend these sums of money in the public service. The Whigs rolled up upon this wave of emotion, and it was voted by 253 to 105 that the money had been expended for the security and honour of the nation.

Nevertheless, Marlborough came home from the most fortunate of all the campaigns of the Grand Alliance and from his year of noblest service to an altered scene. Europe saw him at the summit of glory. Abroad all the doubters were convinced; in London all the detractors were for the moment silenced. Both Houses of Parliament received him with

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 130.

## MARLBOROUGH

addresses of unbounded admiration. The pension refused in 1702, settled only for his life in 1704, was now, with his titles and estates, made perpetual upon his heirs, male or female, for ever, "in order," as the statute set forth, "that the memory of these deeds should never lack one of his name to bear it." The City welcomed him with spacious hospitality. The common people gazed upon him as a prodigy and cheered him as their protector. The captured standards of Ramillies could not be hung in Westminster Hall: it was already decked with the standards of Blenheim. To the Guildhall therefore the splendid cavalcade made its way, and here were displayed the trophies of the second greatest defeat which the arms of France in the reign of Louis XIV sustained. Amid thunderous salutes of cannon all the notables of British life knelt in thanksgiving in St Paul's Cathedral on New Year's Eve in celebration of "the wonderful year" that had ended.

But underneath all was insecure. The Queen's heart was estranged. The Tories saw themselves definitely consolidating as an Opposition. Harley and St John began to look about them.

## CHAPTER XII

### MARLBOROUGH AND CHARLES XII

DISASTER is the name affixed by history to the Allies' <sup>1707, Spring</sup> campaign of 1707. On the Rhine, on the Riviera, and in Spain the French won or even triumphed. In Flanders, the main theatre, where the best and far the largest armies faced each other, where Marlborough commanded, no victory was gained. At the same time the slow, subtle processes by which Marlborough's foundations in England were sapped made steady progress, and grew from an intrigue into a crisis. At the end of 1706 the Grand Alliance was once again found incapable of enduring success. Each partner was balancing the hopes of extortionate gains against the risks of a separate peace. Ramillies and its companion Turin had removed from short-sighted Governments the fear of general defeat at the hands of France. The war was hard and long. Why pursue the theme of victory farther? The cruel need which had called into being the disjointed federation of so many states, kingdoms, republics, empires, principalities, had been banished by the swords of Marlborough and Eugene. The temptation to rush for the spoil, to grab and depart, was strong. The Dutch could have their dyke; Austria saw herself mistress of Italy; Prussia was sure of important satisfactions in status and in territory; Germany, incoherent and ineffectual, at this time felt scarcely less fear of Charles XII than of Louis XIV. Thus every common impulse was relaxed, every contribution was neglected, and every preparation for 1707 delayed.

But the power of France was still unbroken. Louis XIV was forming his armies for the new campaign. Twenty-one thousand militia were drafted into the front line. Vendôme and the Elector in Flanders, Villars on the Upper Rhine, Noailles in Roussillon, Tessé in Dauphiné, and Berwick and

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the Duke of Orleans in Spain confronted the Allies. The Great King sought peace, but still only a French peace: and at any moment a turn of fortune would revive his full claims. Between equals and similars there always is much to be said for peace even through a drawn war; but to a wide, numerous, disconnected coalition, faced by a homogeneous military nation and a grand autocracy, a drawn war embodied in a treaty spelt permanent defeat. One man, still carrying with him the British island in its most remarkable efflorescence of genius and energy, stood against this kind of accommodation. Marlborough, harassed and hampered upon every side, remained unexhausted and all-compelling.

After the day at Blenheim had shifted the axis of the war he had planned the decisive invasion of France by the Moselle. In the sunshine of un hoped-for prosperity the German states had failed him. The surest, easiest road into France would never be trodden by the Allies. The chance had fled. But now 1706 had restored the Blenheim situation, and once again he formed a plan which if it were executed—as with ordinary loyalties it could be—would bend or break France to the will of England. This plan lay in that high region of strategy where all the forces are measured and all the impulsions understood. Since it had proved impossible to lead Germany into France directly by the Moselle, a wider operation was required. His conception was now a double invasion from north and south. This used the resources, the war-will of England, and above all her supreme naval power, at the highest pitch. With his present ascendancy in Holland, with his redcoats and the British-paid contingents and subsidies, Marlborough and the Dutch would hold and press hard upon the principal army of France in the fortress zone of the Netherlands. Simultaneously Eugene, with the forces of the Empire sustained by the allied mercenaries and the whole strength of the English and Dutch fleets in the Mediterranean, and based upon sea-borne supplies and munitions, would invade France from the south. For this purpose they must first of all seize a safe fortified harbour through which the amphibious power of England could

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exert itself to the full, and also animate the Imperial armies. The mighty French monarchy would be taken between hammer and anvil. This he deemed would be irresistible and final.

According to the recognized and enduring conventions of war, an attack on a central body by opposite forces can normally be met by the simple expedient of masking both assailants, and organizing a mobile central force which can be thrown against either in overwhelming strength as opportunity suggests. But this school-book diagram, like all other strategic manœuvres, is governed by the facts of time, distance, and numbers. When the two fronts threatened are so far apart that it takes many weeks to transfer troops from the one to the other, and when the weight of the two attacks or invasions is almost insupportable in either quarter, the manœuvre which looks so obvious and has so often succeeded in a restricted theatre ceases to work. The separate inroads forge ahead, and no decisively superior concentration can be made against either. This was the basis of Marlborough's strategy for the year 1707. But all hung on the sea base. And there was only one. Toulon must be taken: it must become the root of an immense rodent growth in the bowels of France, leading to a fatal collapse either on the northern or the southern front, or perhaps on both. Here was the way to achieve the full purpose of the Allies and finish the war.

This scheme, for which Marlborough toiled and ran great and drawn-out hazards, reveals to us his true views about the Spanish theatre. We have seen him repeatedly and genuinely supporting the war in Spain, always ready to send trusted generals and good, sorely needed troops from England or from Flanders to the Peninsula: always ready to accept this large, costly, and disconnected diversion. Although, as has been shown, there were substantial offsets, such a policy cannot easily be reconciled with the canons of true strategy. Political and commercial factors had launched the Allies into a great war in Spain. Not only the Tory Party, but on the whole the bulk of English opinion, preferred an alliance with



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Portugal and an expedition to Spain to the grim ding-dong in Flanders. To Parliament Spain seemed the easy and clever road. It was in fact an additional *détour* on a journey already only too long. Why, then, did our great commander acquiesce so tamely in this questionable exertion? Did he agree or did he submit? There is no doubt that he submitted. He paid off at great cost Tory and English prejudices, and did the best he could with what was left. Otherwise even that might have been lost.

But now we shall see how truly he measured the war in Spain. The capture of Toulon and a real thrust up towards Lyons into the vitals of Southern France would, in his judgment, instantly clear Spain. The French, no matter how few there were to drive them, would flow out of the Peninsula as naturally as water flows out of a cistern when its bottom tap is opened. Therefore in the winter of 1706-7 Marlborough's central aim became the siege and capture of Toulon.

The victory at Turin had roused Victor Amadeus to a high degree of war vigour and of territorial desire. He hoped to have the concessions he had been promised in Lombardy endorsed by treaty with the French, and to spread his sovereignty in Provence by conquest. He was therefore eager to invade Southern France. All his ideas and efforts were in harmony with Marlborough's plans. The Empire, on the other hand, had contrary ambitions. After the rough treatment they had received from the Dutch in Belgium, and with the proofs of extreme Dutch claims about the Barrier before their eyes, they were resolved to take physical possession not only of Lombardy, but also of the Kingdom of Naples. They were not interested in aiding the general victory by carrying the war into Southern France. They developed an obstinate resistance even to the transfer to Savoy of those parts of Lombardy which had been specifically promised to Victor Amadeus in the original treaty by which he had joined the Grand Alliance. Naples, as a conquest or at least as a counter for the peace treaty, now became their supreme desire. The whole urge of the Imperialist policy was there-

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fore divergent from the purpose of common victory which Marlborough steadfastly pursued.

As early as December 6, 1706, Marlborough wrote a guarded but none the less pointed letter to Wratislaw in which he complained of the ill-treatment by the Empire of the Duke of Savoy, and hinted that he might not be able to prevent the twenty-eight thousand Prussians, Palatines, and Hessians in the pay of the Sea Powers, without whom the victorious campaign of Turin could never have been undertaken, being withdrawn at the instance of the Dutch from the Italian theatre, unless the Imperialist efforts were loyally devoted to the common cause, and justice done to Savoy.<sup>1</sup> The Imperial Court were alive to the consequences of this threat, which was, in fact, the only lever which Marlborough could use upon them. Nevertheless, they were recalcitrant in the last degree. They retarded every concession to Savoy; they raised every possible objection to the invasion of Provence and the siege of Toulon; and they remained bent above all things on the seizure of Naples. Upon this last froward project they paraded an additional grievance. Peterborough, during his self-imposed mission to the Duke of Savoy in the autumn of 1706, had without the slightest authority held out expectations of a landing force of five thousand British troops for the capture of Naples. Marlborough rejected this demand on the very same day (December 11) that it was presented to him in London, and wrote to Eugene accordingly.<sup>2</sup> He insisted upon the siege of Toulon, and refused to countenance the excursion to Naples. An acrimonious correspondence ensued in which, in language which became increasingly blunt, he reminded Wratislaw of the immense aid which the Sea Powers were rendering to the Empire, of its helplessness if that aid were withdrawn, and of the grievous disappointment of the Allies at the failure of the Emperor's war-effort.

It was impossible for the Imperialists to march on Naples unless the English Fleet by its command of the sea prevented French sea-borne reinforcements forestalling the long, slow

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

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overland expedition. This potent factor, added to the menace of the withdrawal of the troops of the Sea Powers, forced the Emperor to transfer some of the fortresses of Lombardy to the Duke of Savoy, and to agree to the Toulon plan. But nothing could persuade him to abandon the design upon Naples. Early in February Marlborough made a detailed written agreement with Victor Amadeus for the attack upon Toulon. England would furnish forty ships of the line to sustain the advance along the Riviera of the Savoyard and Imperialist troops. The fleet would supply money, powder, and food upon a very large scale. It would land cannon and sailors in strong force for the siege and the preliminary operations. Article XV was laconic and precise: "The proposed expedition to Naples is excluded, being judged at the present time impracticable, and harmful to the interests of the campaign in France."<sup>1</sup>

This document was presented to Vienna as decisive upon the controversy. Confronted with a virtual ultimatum, the Imperial Court behaved in the worst manner. They agreed sullenly to allow their troops to share in the Toulon expedition, and to the vital point that Prince Eugene should command it. They persisted in their plans against Naples. They were taking a far more disloyal and selfish step. They entered ardently into a military convention with France which resulted in the Treaty of Milan. This amounted to a separate local peace. The Emperor agreed with Louis XIV to close down the Italian front altogether. The twenty thousand French troops who were blockaded in the various fortresses of Northern Italy and must in a few months have become prisoners of war were accorded free passage to rejoin the main hostile armies. Portions of them reinforced Vendôme in Flanders; the rest strengthened Marshal Tessé, who was guarding the passes of the French southern front.

The history of all coalitions is a tale of the reciprocal complaints of allies; but the conduct of the Imperial Court at this juncture stands forth remarkably as an example of wanton,

<sup>1</sup> *Feldzüge*, Series I, ix, 335 *et seq.* Printed from the copy communicated by Victor Amadeus to Prince Eugene, January-February 1707.

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reckless self-seeking. If the Dutch were too narrowly set upon their Barrier, if English ambitions sought a disproportionate humiliation of France, at least the Sea Powers backed their aims with enormous and generous exertions for the common cause. But the Empire, saved from disaster in Bavaria in 1704, restored to success in Italy in 1706 by the resources of England and Holland, dependent upon them not only for the inestimable prizes to which it aspired, but also for its very existence, stands guilty of folly and ingratitude of the basest kind.

Through all this Marlborough, working from a distance, using his control in London and his influence at The Hague, strove tirelessly for the larger strategy of the war. His faith was in Eugene. In 1706 he had provided him with the core and substance of the army which had conquered at Turin. In 1707 he placed at his disposal overwhelming naval power, and encouraged him by every practical means to strike another equally glorious and possibly final blow for the allied cause at Toulon. "I not only esteem, but really love that Prince." To arm him for another splendid achievement he would be himself content to face Vendôme with a smaller army and to conduct a campaign in Flanders under most unpromising conditions. Never mind! He would manage it somehow, and far to the south his great comrade would gather the fruits which would make amends for all. We shall presently recount how these hopes were blighted.

During the successes of 1706 the Northern War encroached ever nearer to the main quarrel. Charles XII was now at his zenith. His triumphs over the Russians were followed at the beginning of 1706 by his crushing defeat of King Augustus of Poland, also Elector of Saxony, at the battle of Fraustadt (February 13). At the head of his veteran and victorious Swedish army Charles marched into Saxony, and, establishing himself at Altranstädt, a few miles from Leipzig, proceeded to exact his terms. These were at once humiliating and sinister. Augustus must renounce his title to the crown of Poland. He must recognize Charles's nominee,

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Stanislaus, as Polish king. He must write personally to felicitate him. He must abandon the Russian alliance. In order to make his breach with Russia mortal, he must perform a deed of infamy which the Czar could never forgive, which, indeed, destroyed all basis of faith and honour between the Saxon and the Russian Courts. He must surrender Patkul.

The reader will remember how Patkul, a Livonian patriot and Swedish subject, in revenge for his own and his country's ill-usage had made himself the mainspring of the coalition against Charles XII. The influence which this impressive personage, waging what was almost a private war, had been able to exert upon so many states and princes was a remarkable feature in these times. Patkul was now General and Plenipotentiary of the Czar. He was his envoy to the Court of King Augustus. He had come there in the sanctity of laws and customs sacred even to barbarian rulers. Although his diplomacy had latterly been tortuous, he had entered Saxony as a friend and ally. King Augustus must now deliver him foully and treacherously to the vengeance of Charles XII. That there might be no hitch in the execution of these grisly terms, a final condition prescribed that the Swedish army should have free quarters in Saxony during the winter of 1706-7, levying their contributions on the countryside by force in so far as their needs were not supplied by the Saxon Government. It was not till September 1706 that Augustus could subjugate himself to these conditions. By the Treaty of Altranstädt he bowed to his fate and his shame. At midnight on April 7, 1707, the Swedish general Meyerfeld halted before the gates of Königstein with a band of soldiers. Patkul, who had been for some months detained in the fortress and had neglected a proffered opportunity to escape, was handed over to Charles's representative, and forthwith chained hand and foot as a Swedish deserter and high traitor. From the King of Sweden's point of view this was no doubt a true bill. After some months of rigorous confinement and a vain hunger-strike Patkul was brought before a Swedish court martial, and



CHARLES XII

From an engraving after the portrait by Robert Garrall



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thereafter the General and Ambassador of Peter the Great was broken upon the wheel and expired in excruciating torment.

Charles XII was now twenty-five. Encamped in the heart of Germany at the head of forty thousand devoted, ruthless, athletic, disciplined Swedish co-adventurers whom no troops had yet been able to withstand, he became the object of the most earnest anxiety, and solicitation from all parts of Central Europe. He recognized no law but his grand caprice; and Christendom, divided against itself, competed for his sword. It was no easy matter to obtain access to him. He lived the life of a general on active service. He saw no ambassadors, and referred all diplomatic notes to Stockholm, where nothing could be settled without his approval. Louis XIV had already sent M. Besenval to wait at his tent-pegs. The Swedish King found it difficult to decide between his various revenges and opportunities. His hatred for the Czar was equalled by his hatred for King Augustus. His dislike of France and the religious persecutions of Louis XIV was matched by his many points of quarrel with the Empire. He conceived himself the champion of Protestantism, particularly of the Lutheran Churches. Personal brawls and fisticuffs had flared up between his agents and the Imperial representatives. An Imperial ambassador had received a box on the ear. There were tangled disputes with the Emperor about Muscovite troops who had taken refuge in the Reich, about supplies, and of course religion. To which quarter would Charles XII turn his fierce and as yet invincible bayonets? Throughout all Germany in the winter of 1706 this was the main preoccupation. To the Sea Powers it was a monstrous irrelevance. But there he poised, with the choice of plunging into the Russian wilderness or marching into the very heart of world affairs.

We shall not weary the reader with the intricate details of the disputes and negotiations which centred round the youthful conqueror's tent. The main outlines will suffice. Marlborough was alarmed at Charles XII's attitude as early as September 1706. "I am very much afraid," he wrote to



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Heinsius, "that this march of the Sweeds [*sic*] into Saxe will create a great degree of trouble. . . . Whenever the States or England write to the King of Sweden, there must be care taken that there be no threats in the letter, for the King of Sweden is of a very particular humor."<sup>1</sup>

In February he wrote again to the Pensionary :

If you thought it might be of any advantage to the Public, I should not scruple the trouble of a journey as far as Saxony, to wait on the King, and endeavour, if need be, to set him right, or at least to penetrate his design, that we may take the justest measures we can not to be surprised. I have mentioned this to nobody here, neither will, till I have your opinion. . . .<sup>2</sup>

There was a general feeling in the shuddering Courts of Germany and in the dour Cabinets of the Sea Powers that Marlborough, with his military glamour and almost equally renowned diplomatic arts, was the man who of all others could penetrate the King's designs, could tip the balance, if it were possible, and cushion this formidable, romantic, ruffianly genius and his grim phalanx into the Russian wastes. Accordingly on April 20 the Captain-General set off in his coach from The Hague through Hanover to the tent of Charles XII. Many picturesque accounts have been given of their meeting, which fascinated contemporary Europe as a "topic of wonder" to all men. They met as commanding generals each fresh from glowing victories. Whatever effects could be produced depended upon personal contact. Biographers of Marlborough usually claim that his mission at once transformed the purposes of Charles XII. This seems unreasonable. It established a relationship upon which Marlborough negotiated all the summer with results which eventually reached their conclusion in 1709 upon the battlefield of Pultawa.

The interest for our purpose which attaches to the details of the meeting is Marlborough's personal demeanour and management. When he arrived at Altranstädt from his tiring journey through Hanover he went to see Count Piper,

<sup>1</sup> Vreede, pp. 117-118.

<sup>2</sup> February 17, 1708; *ibid.*, p. 220.

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who was a kind of Prime Minister to Charles XII. The Count, for reasons which are not worth examining, sent out word to say that he was engaged, and kept Marlborough in his coach waiting half an hour behind his appointment. Then the Swede, having asserted his dignity, came down the steps of his house to the gate to receive Queen Anne's envoy. Marlborough got out of the coach at the same moment and, putting on his hat, walked past Count Piper without recognizing him or saluting him, and turned aside on to the grass "as if to make water."<sup>1</sup> After a delay more protracted than would have seemed necessary he came back into the path, and with courtly gestures and ceremonious phrasing began his embassy. Count Piper meanwhile had stood embarrassed in the roadway.

A good general would probably have the knack of retorting affronts so as to retain for himself the advantages of a discussion. There was a day when Murat and Joseph Bonaparte forced themselves upon Napoleon in his bedroom. The Emperor was standing by a large hip-bath filled to the brim with hot water, and as his defence against this intrusion of public business into private affairs had only his towel. The others were dressed in full uniform of blue and gold for a great parade. As they approached him Napoleon threw himself back into the hip-bath and splashed them from head to foot, while, being in a state of nature himself, he underwent no corresponding disadvantage. He then proceeded to deal with the matter in hand.

Charles XII and Marlborough were interested in each other—the first a knight-errant pursuing glory through all hazards, at all costs, and irrespective of reward; the other the statesman and commander, trying to shield large public purposes from capricious disturbance. Charles stands for all time as an example of the firmness of the human soul under every freak of fortune. John was a monument of practical sagacity. The young King, since he leaped from his throne at the throat of Europe at seventeen, had only experienced measureless triumph. The elderly General,

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, II, 167. He was at Altranstadt at the time, and is a credible witness.

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reared as a courtier, with all the ups and downs of a lengthening life behind him—a little heavy with the weight of all that weighed upon him, and webbed by the combinations of which he was the motive power—had a different status and outlook. But War and Victory were a theme, a basis, and a bond. At their meeting Marlborough presented a letter from Queen Anne: "Had her sex not prevented it, she would have crossed the sea to visit a prince admired by the whole universe. I am in this particular more happy than the Queen, and I wish I could serve in some campaign under so great a commander that I might learn what I yet want to know in the art of war."<sup>1</sup> Charles XII appeared to accept the compliment, and it was frequently repeated by his devoted army. He was not to be easily flattered, and it is said that he deemed it overdone. He thought, we learn from Voltaire, that Marlborough in his scarlet uniform and Garter star and riband looked less like a soldier than he himself in his austere dress and with his studied abhorrence of all show.

Marlborough, for his part, took trouble during his stay to find out personally and through his officers about the Swedish army. What was it worth? How could it be dealt with, if need be? He found the Rev. John Robinson, the English envoy to Sweden, an invaluable companion. Robinson, who had thirty years' experience of the Swedish Court, has left various letters upon the visit. He says that Marlborough remarked about the Swedish army, "It has no artillery-train, no hospitals, no magazines. It is an army which lives on what it finds, *et qui dans une guerre de chicane périrait bientôt.*" Even the captious Klopp is provoked to comment, "These seem to be the words of a soothsayer."<sup>2</sup> In fact Marlborough was measuring the ugly, but none the less possible, prospect of having to deal professionally with an abominable disturbance of the War of the Spanish Succession.

Often in the casual remarks of great men one learns their true mind in an intimate way. In this expression "*a war of chicane*" there lies a fund of reflection. A war of chicane is a war of artifice and bickering, of pettifogging even, a war

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 166.

<sup>2</sup> Klopp, xii, 387.

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where a fortnight's delay before some awkward lines or fortress would run an enemy short of bread or cash, a war where time would count more than action, a baffling war ; a war of deadlocks, a war where the enemy must face continually an ebbing tide. This was not Marlborough's kind of war. He was entirely modern. The offensive, the aggressive, the grand, sharp decision in the open field, and the rest would follow, as Napoleon would say, *par surcroît*. But if nothing could be done with the King of Sweden, *a war of chicane* was the war which Marlborough and his friend Eugene, with many a comprehending nod, might find themselves not incapable of waging against him.

The meeting was, however, both memorable and important. The two men had a long talk about what they understood best. Marlborough spoke French, which the King understood but did not speak, and Robinson translated the Royal replies. Charles XII, with the reports of Blenheim and Ramillies in his mind, asked whether, and if so why, Marlborough thought it necessary to charge at the head of his troops. Marlborough replied in effect, "Only because otherwise they would not think so much of me." The King agreed with this. They were together for about four hours, until, in fact, his Majesty's "kettledrums called him to prayers."

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

KING OF SWEDEN'S QUARTERS

April 16 [1707]

\* I gote to this place last night so early as to have one hours Conversation with Comte Pyper, and this morning a litle after ten I waitted on his Maty. He keep me with him til his hour of dyning which was at twelf, and as I am told set longer at diner by half an hour, then he used to do. He also took me again into his Chamber wher wee Continued for above an hour, and then his kettledrums called him to prayers. Mr Robinson was with mee all the time, so that I must refere You to the account he gives the Secretary,<sup>1</sup> for I am come soe lait into my Quarters, that I have not time to send for a Copie of his letter, nor to

<sup>1</sup> In *Dispatches*, iii, 347-348.

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say more to You, than that I am in hopes my Journey may do good.<sup>1</sup>

The King expected Marlborough to make him proposals upon the international situation, but all accounts show that Marlborough kept entirely upon personal and professional ground. He did not even, though he had been pressed to do so, presume to intercede on behalf of Patkul. Voltaire in his romantic but none the less profound *Histoire de Charles XII* wrote :

Marlborough, who was never in a haste to make his proposals, and who, by a long course of experience, had learned the art of diving into the real characters of men, and discovering the connexion between their most secret thoughts and their actions, gestures, and discourse, studied the King with close attention. When he spoke to him of war in general, he thought he perceived in his Majesty a natural aversion to France, and noticed that he talked with pleasure of the conquests of the Allies. He mentioned the Czar to him, and observed that his eyes always kindled at the name, notwithstanding the calm tone of the conversation. He remarked, besides, a map of Russia lying on a table. He wanted no more to convince him that the real design and sole ambition of the King of Sweden was to dethrone the Czar, as he had done the King of Poland. He divined that if Charles remained in Saxony it was only to impose some hard conditions on the Emperor of Germany. He knew the Emperor would make no resistance, and so the whole affair would be wound up without difficulty. He left Charles, therefore, to follow his own bent ; and, satisfied with having read his mind, made him no proposals.<sup>2</sup>

Voltaire asserts that this version was given him by Sarah after Marlborough's death.

It is alleged that more precise methods were adopted with Count Piper ; that he was bribed with large or at least substantial sums of money to push his master to the east instead of to the west. Historical argument has developed

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS. This letter seems to dispose of Voltaire's story, against which Lediard argues at length, that Marlborough did not visit Count Piper immediately on arriving, but first addressed himself to Count Piper's subordinate, Baron Gortz. See Lediard, ii, 165 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII*, in *Œuvres Complètes* (1878), xvi, Part 2, 225.

## MARLBOROUGH AND CHARLES XII

about this, and no one would wish to do injustice to the memory of the gallant, faithful servitor of Charles XII, who became one of the many victims of the defeat at Pultawa in 1709. But we know that Marlborough made arrangements to procure considerable sums of money for this avowed purpose before starting on his mission; and there is a matter-of-fact business letter from him on July 9, 1708, to Mr Secretary Boyle which contains the following blunt paragraph: "As to what you mentioned in your former relating to Count Piper and the two other Swedish Ministers, it is very true what Mr Robinson writes that they were promised the yearly allowance of £2500; but whatever may be thought fit hereafter, I do not see any necessity for the present payment of it."<sup>1</sup> Most people nowadays will consider this decisive upon the point.<sup>2</sup>

The practice of Ministers receiving gifts from foreign Powers in the course of negotiations was not unusual, and often known and tolerated by their masters. Torcy accustomed himself to mention his receipts to Louis XIV. The entry of Portugal into the war had been preceded by a veritable auction. Stanhope in this same year 1707 accompanied the commercial treaty which he obtained from Charles III by substantial payments to Count and Countess Oropeza.<sup>3</sup> At the moment in Leipzig Besenval, the French envoy, had received precise instructions from Versailles. "If the King of Sweden helps to bring about the general peace of Europe, the King [of France] will reward the labours of Count Piper, and his Majesty has already taken the resolution of giving him 300,000 livres as a reward for his exertions."<sup>4</sup> Against this were the English counter-offers.

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, 100.

<sup>2</sup> But see also a letter from Robinson to Harley:

"LEIPZIG

"April 19/30

"By his Grace's orders I have acquainted Count Piper, M. Hermeline and Cederheim that her Majesty will give yearly pensions: to the first £1500 and to each of the other £500; but the second for the first time £1000, and that the first payment should be made without delay." (Quoted in "Marlborough and Charles XII," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. xii (New Series).)

<sup>3</sup> See B. Williams, *Stanhope*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>4</sup> *Instructions des Ambassadeurs de France*, "Suède," p. 229.

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It must not, however, be inferred that any of these payments induced their recipients to fail in their duty. Other and far more drastic processes awaited such defaults. In almost every case the Ministers did their work in accordance with their country's interests or with the wishes of the sovereigns they served; but they were very glad to be able to pick up large sums of money from one side or other, or preferably from both, in the course of their public duties, according to the lax conventions of that age. These gains were regarded as no less respectable than the large profits which nowadays so often come to the organizers of a sound and successful flotation in the markets. The facts should nevertheless be recorded.

The day after the talk of the two warriors Charles XII set off according to his custom (and Napoleon's) at full gallop for Leipzig, where he had arranged to meet Augustus, de-throned King of Poland and vanquished, but still ruling, Elector of Saxony. More than that, Stanislaus, Charles XII's nominee and actual holder of the Polish crown, was in attendance. Queen Anne had not recognized this usurping pawn of the Swedish victories. Charles therefore asked Marlborough, whom he kept at his side, whether he could meet him. The Duke made no difficulty, and when Stanislaus arrived through the double doors he bowed and addressed him as "Your Majesty," which committed England to nothing, but was received with evident gratification by both the conqueror, Charles, and his puppet, Stanislaus. Apart from compliments he was careful to hold no intercourse with the unrecognized sovereign. The King of Prussia did not wish to be left out of these conversations, and Marlborough on the next day therefore repaired to Charlottenburg, where he met King Frederick. He thus, according to the biographers of his day, "met four kings in four days." His comment to Sarah is the instructive "If I was obliged to make a choice, it should be [the] youngest [Charles XII]." <sup>1</sup>

He returned by hard stages from Leipzig to Brussels to meet the news of the worst disaster which had yet befallen the Allies.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 182.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ALMANZA AND STOLLHOFEN

THE departure of Peterborough for Italy in August 1706 had deprived the allied chiefs in Spain of the only objective upon which they were agreed. They resumed their quarrels with added zest, and a new figure, Lord Rivers, arrived presently from England with novel complications. Peterborough, for his part, returned to Spain for Christmas. His credit with the London Cabinet was extinct. To the convinced disapprobation of Godolphin and Marlborough was now added the active hostility of Sunderland. The new Secretary of State had no sooner received the seals than he set himself to examine Peterborough's conduct. In accordance with the Whig Party view, he stood by Galway, "one of King William's men." His prim, pedantic nature was affronted by Peterborough's extravagances. His taste for controversy was excited by Peterborough's boastful, acrimonious, and endless dispatches. He determined to break him. Meanwhile the mercurial Earl reached the allied headquarters at Valencia in the middle of January 1707 to find discord at its height. The hatreds against him had in his absence been supplanted by a different, a more recent and more lively crop. Indeed, he even seemed about to capture the favour of Charles III. But the hounds were on his trail. Along the slow sea communications with England Sunderland's directions made their way. Galway was appointed to the supreme command in Spain. Peterborough, thus superseded, continued to disport himself gaily in council, and no one was quite sure of his actual position.

1707,  
April and  
May

Strong reinforcements had arrived. We have seen how the whole of the British and Huguenot troops, above eight thousand strong, so long held in readiness for a "descent" on the French coasts, had been deflected in August 1706 to the



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Peninsula. They had lingered at Lisbon till the end of the year. They arrived in Valencia in February 1707. In all, the Allies disposed of nearly thirty thousand men. The three proverbial alternatives presented themselves to the council of war held on January 15 at Valencia. Galway and Stanhope, in accordance with Marlborough's general directions, proposed to combine all forces and march on Madrid, challenging a decisive battle on the way. Charles III and the "Vienna crew" urged that the troops should be dispersed in garrisons for the defence of the loyal provinces of Valencia and Catalonia. He was backed by Noyelles, whom we last saw leading Marlborough's advance guards to the forcing of the lines of Brabant in 1705.<sup>1</sup> Noyelles had served in Spain during 1706, and he was rapidly replacing Lichtenstein in the King's confidence and favour.

Peterborough ridiculed both plans, and proposed to lead a large detachment to join the Duke of Savoy. All were therefore opposed to Peterborough, and as disaster attended their action he was subsequently able to claim that all were wrong. Indeed, it is hard to understand how experienced generals could have drifted into the feeble-fatal compromise which they adopted after all reasonable argument had burned itself out. In the upshot King Charles, with Stanhope and the Austro-Spanish troops, marched northward to garrison Catalonia and Aragon, while Galway, with the flower of the allied infantry and Das Minas and his surviving Portuguese, set forth, cruelly weakened in numbers but in considerable optimism, for Madrid. Peterborough did not accompany them. Sunderland's later dispatches had arrived. He was stripped of all his commissions ashore and afloat, and peremptorily recalled to explain his measures, his excursions, and the bills he had drawn upon the British account.

Marshal Berwick, soon to be reinforced by eight thousand men released from Italy by the Treaty of Milan, lay in the field before Madrid. He had prepared magazines in Murcia to enable him to manœuvre there. Galway marched upon these magazines as a preliminary to his advance upon Madrid.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, pp. 555-559.

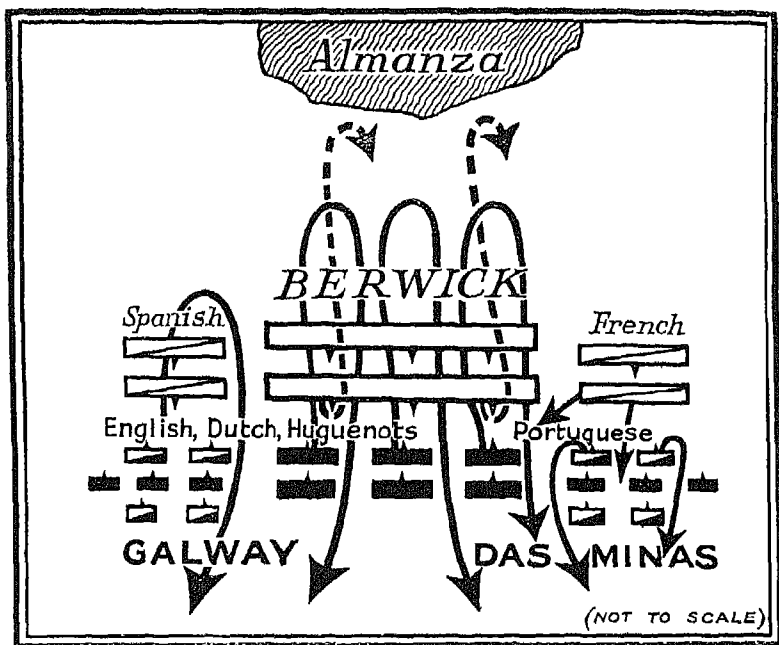
## ALMANZA AND STOLLHOFEN

The population of Murcia were hostile, and sickness made inroads upon the new recruits from England. Galway, who found it difficult to obtain intelligence of the real strength of the enemy, hardened his heart and resolved to force a battle upon Berwick. He had fifteen thousand men, of whom five thousand were British, while Berwick commanded twenty-five thousand, half of whom were French, and was now daily expecting the arrival of the Duke of Orleans with the eight thousand reinforcement. It is not surprising in these circumstances that Berwick was equally desirous of battle. While Galway was besieging the small town of Villena, he heard that the main French army was but four hours distant. He heard also that Orleans had not yet joined it. This was true so far as concerned that tardy Prince. But the bulk of his forces had already reached Berwick, and their royal commander was moving with leisurely gait some days behind them. Forthwith Galway and Das Minas set out against Berwick. At daybreak on April 25 the Allies advanced into the plains before the walled town of Almanza. Here Berwick awaited them in order of battle, with certainly thirty thousand men against fifteen thousand. However, the wine was drawn and must be drunk.

Berwick drew up seventy-six squadrons and seventy-two battalions in two lines in front of Almanza. He placed the Spanish cavalry on his right, the infantry in the centre, and the French on his left. Galway's army was so weak in cavalry that it was necessary to intersperse the English on his left with infantry detachments. His main body of infantry faced Berwick's centre. Their right was protected by the Portuguese horse, who under Das Minas demanded this post of honour. The battle was begun about three o'clock by the horse and foot of the English left. They broke the first line of the Spanish cavalry. Inspired by this, the infantry of the Allies—English, Dutch, and Huguenots—attacked the greatly superior forces opposite to them with admirable spirit and actually drove this large mass of French and Spanish foot almost to the walls of Almanza. Meanwhile, however, the cavalry of the French left observed that

## MARLBOROUGH

the Portuguese in their post of honour on the right had not conformed to the general advance, and that the right flank of the allied infantry was therefore uncovered. They therefore rode forward upon both. The Portuguese cavalry galloped from the field before any collision was possible. Das Minas and a handful of his officers threw themselves into a square of Portuguese infantry which made a stand; and



THE BATTLE OF ALMANZA

when this broke they rode round to fight it out with Galway on the left, or quitted the field. The whole French cavalry then fell upon the naked flank of the allied centre, breaking up and cutting down whole battalions and throwing at least a third of it into disorder.

The battle now became most fierce and bloody. The one-armed Galway, blinded by the blood from a sabre-cut above his eyes, could no longer command. Berwick, relieved by the partial confusion among the allied infantry, transferred his best French battalions to sustain the yielding Spanish horse.

## ALMANZA AND STOLLHOHEN

The English cavalry in their turn were driven back, and now not only the right but the left of the British, Dutch, and Huguenot infantry was exposed to the full fury of cavalry and infantry attack. Practically all the Portuguese troops had now fled, and little more than eight thousand infantry remained to face the exultant onset of at least three times their number. Galway, whose wound was now bandaged so that he could again see, led forward his reserve of English infantry to protect and cover the retreat of the centre. An orderly withdrawal from the field began; and, surprising as it may seem, this was effected. Galway, with 3,500 English and Dutch, made good his retreat in unbroken order. The remnants of the centre under Count Dohna, one of Marlborough's veterans, and Major-General Shrimpton likewise retired in a disciplined array, but in a different direction. They found a respite in darkness and among the mountains. The separated fragments of the allied army lay for the night nearly twenty miles apart. With the dawn Galway saw himself bound to continue his retreat upon Valencia. Shrimpton, with about two thousand British, resisted all attacks for two days, but, being then surrounded on all sides without food or hope of succour, he surrendered at discretion upon the third.

History has noted the oddity that in this battle the English commanded by the Frenchman, Galway (Ruvigny), were beaten by the French commanded by the Englishman, Berwick. The proportion of casualties was unusual. The Allies left on the field four thousand killed and wounded and three thousand prisoners, or half their total force. Berwick's own casualties were also severe. He admitted only two thousand, but most authorities compute them at at least five thousand.<sup>1</sup> There were five thousand allied stragglers, most of whom rejoined the army. Galway retreated rapidly to Alcira, where he reorganized his troops and arranged for the defence of the frontier fortresses of Valencia. Here he was joined by two thousand six hundred reinforcements newly landed by Admiral Byng.

<sup>1</sup> Parnell says six thousand.

## MARLBOROUGH

Considering the memorable character and consequences of this savage battle, the accounts are both scanty and obscure. It is therefore right to print a few new letters upon it from the Blenheim archives.

*Galway to Stanhope*

ALCIRA

*April 28*

\* I have given you an account of our march to Yecla and Montelegre and our mining the enemy's magazines there. Upon our return we endeavoured to take the Castle of Villena, but failed there on account of heavy cannon and our men being stopped by the rocks. The enemies having assembled all their forces marched back to Montelegre and from thence to Almanza. You know your resolution was taken this winter at Valencia to march to the enemy and give a battle if they set for us before our forces should diminish; which was always yours and my opinion. We accordingly, all the Generals being of the same sentiment, thought this the best opportunity, our forces being fresh and very good. We marched on the 25th into the plain of Almanza. The enemy waited for us near the town where we gave them battle and were defeated; both our wings being broke and routed. Our foot was hounded by the enemy's horse, so that none could get off. Don Juan de Alayda and fifty horse got to the mountains and Comte Dohna and Mr Shrimpton, and with them considerable body of English, Dutch and Portuguese foot. He would then have marched away at break of day Tuesday morning, but Comte Dohna judged he should not, because he had sent a parley to the Duke of Berwick, so Don J. de A. left them, and met no enemy on the way. Last night a Captain of Miquelets came to me as from thence for succours and bread. He says that he left Tuesday at six in the afternoon, that they had been attacked and taken the enemy's cannon with which he had left them firing at the enemy. This man came by way of Xativa to get some men to conduct them home, being laden with bread; it being impossible for us to send any convoys by the open road or help them with any horse to favour their retreat.

All the Generals that are here assembled yesterday to consult what was now to be done. All agreed we were not in a position to think of defending this kingdom, and resolved to retire to

## ALMANZA AND STOLLHOFEN

Tortosa with what horse is left us, embarking baggage and sick and wounded on board the fleet at Denia or at Valencia, according to which I have wrote to Sir George Byng to take the troops on board again and not to land for money, biscuits or other provisions, but to sail to Tortosa and land all there ; after which I am of the opinion he should sail with the fleet to Barcelona. These are too bad news for me to write to the King, which I broke to you, and acquaint him with it that he may send us his orders, if he has any to give us, and that he may take his measures to assemble all those troops in Catalonia and Aragon to defend the Ebro, which I do not know of what use it will be in the situation we are now in, or if there are more to take on this action.

*Galway to Byng*

28th April, 1707

\* I suppose you have already heard the bad news of the battle having been lost. . . . I did not write to you [sooner], not being in a condition, and having a desire to inform you more exactly of the particulars thereof. *We have lost our Artillery*<sup>1</sup> and as to our foot, none is returned in a body unless a few officers and some scattered soldiers. As to ye horse I believe there may be about 3000 or more saved. You are sensible that with that we shall not be in a position to form an army able to protect the kingdom of Valencia. We just now resolved to pass off what we have here and at Valencia with all ye diligence we can to Tortosa to see if we can with the troops his Majesty has in Aragon and Catalonia make up an army. . . .

*Charles III to Marlborough*

BARCELONA

May 3, 1707

\* My Lord Gallway and the Marquis Das Minas had received news that the enemy were camped four hours from them with a great number of cavalry. The forces of the enemy consisted of 9000 horse and 12-14,000 infantry, taking up the position at a place called Almanza as their centre. After this news the two Generals without any other counsel marched on the 25th at dawn their whole army these four good leagues without a halt and without giving any rest to the troops except to put themselves in line of battle, and with their tired soldiers ordered an attack

<sup>1</sup> All extant British accounts declare that the cannon were saved. Evidently this is not true.

## MARLBOROUGH

on the enemy who remained in their position at two o'clock in the afternoon. Our cavalry and particularly the Portuguese gave way without waiting for any charge, abandoning all alone on the plain our infantry without any Commander, My Lord Gallway then having been wounded by a sabre over his eye and the Marquis Das Minas and the greater part of the Generals having retired with the Cavalry in such disorder and precipitation without looking behind them and without pulling rein until they reached Xativa, eight good leagues from the field of battle. The Infantry have been completely defeated and the Comte Dohna and a Portuguese General after having rallied the debris of fourteen battalions, about 2000 men, and after having defended themselves on a height against the enemy for two days without bread or help, which the Generals, all lost and confused, had not sent them any; and at last as far as one knows they have capitulated on terms. The Cavalry has lost hardly anything, as it escaped at the beginning. Of the Infantry one does not know exactly yet how many have been saved.

### *Methuen to Sunderland*

LISBON  
19 May

\* One of the worst circumstances of this fatal accident is in my opinion its happening so early in the year, by which the enemy will have too much time before them to make the most of this victory. I heartily wish that My Lord Galway may with the battered remnants of his army and what the King of Spain has with him make head against them from the other side of the river Ebro, and preserve Catalonia during the whole campaign. I have already written to his Lordship and Mr Stanhope that the only remedy that can be applied must come from Italy if that be possible, for I am afraid that anything which may be sent from England or Holland will come too late.

Considering how destructive was the defeat of Almanza, the rally and front presented by Galway were praiseworthy in a high degree. Crippled, wounded, beaten, discredited, distrusted in the vilest manner, a foreigner hated in England, an intruder in the Spanish brawl, he never for a moment ceased to wage war upon the enemy. He gathered together the fragments of his shattered army; he yielded no post

## ALMANZA AND STOLLHOFEN

without stubborn fighting, and in October, after five months of apparently hopeless struggle, he was still at the head of a coherent force of upwards of fifteen thousand men. He was of course greatly aided by the withdrawal in September of French troops in Spain for the rescue of Toulon. There is nothing known about Galway that is not to his honour.

"This ill success in Spain," wrote Marlborough stubbornly (May 23), "has flung everything backwards, so that the best resolution we can take is to let the French see we are resolved to keep on the war, so that we can have a good peace."<sup>1</sup>

Galway's personal position engaged his attention. "God knows," he wrote to Sarah (June 6), "what is to be done for the recovery of the great disorders that are now in Spain. For by what Lord Rivers says it is too plain King Charles apprehends that Lord Galway betrays him, which can never enter into my head; however if they believe it, it will poison all the undertakings on that side." To Godolphin (June 13): "I find Lord Galway in very bad circumstances. For my own part I think him incapable of being guilty; but if there be no confidence, the consequences must be fatal." (June 23) "It is impracticable for Lord Galway to continue in that service." And, finally, to Lord Sunderland on June 27: "Nobody can have a better opinion than I have of Lord Galway, but when I consider the Court and King of Spain, I think it would be the most barbarous thing in the world to impose upon Galway to stay; for I am very confident he would rather beg his bread—I am sure I would."

His own opinion about the tactics of Almanza was equally decided (Meldert, June 16): "I had this morning yours of the 30th of the last month, with the order of battle, by which it appears that the enemies were very much stronger than Lord Galway, which makes it very strange that by choice they should go to attack them in a plain."<sup>2</sup>

On May 21 the Duke had assumed command of the army which had assembled under Overkirk near Brussels, and

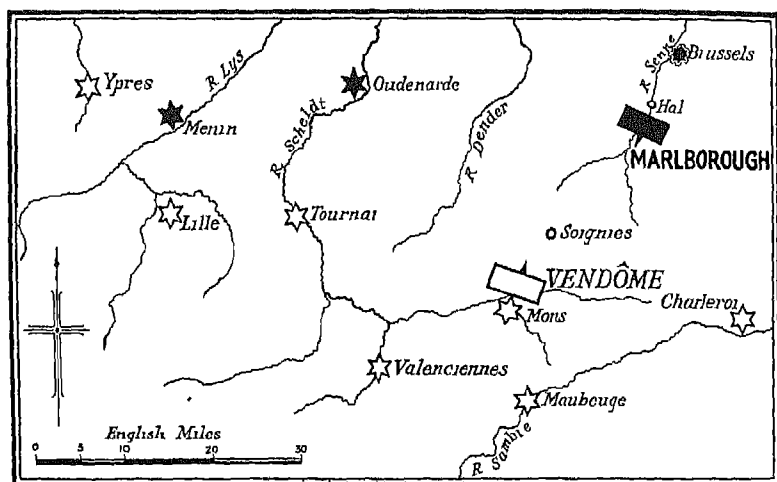
<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 207 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.



## MARLBOROUGH

advanced at once to the south of Hal. He drew out ninety-seven battalions and 164 squadrons with 112 guns, in all about ninety thousand men. Vendôme had assembled around Mons 124 battalions and 195 squadrons—say, about a hundred and ten thousand men, not including the detached cavalry (sixteen squadrons) of La Motte.<sup>1</sup> Vendôme was operating from a frontier well guarded by many fortresses of the first class; and his instructions were not to hazard a battle without urgent



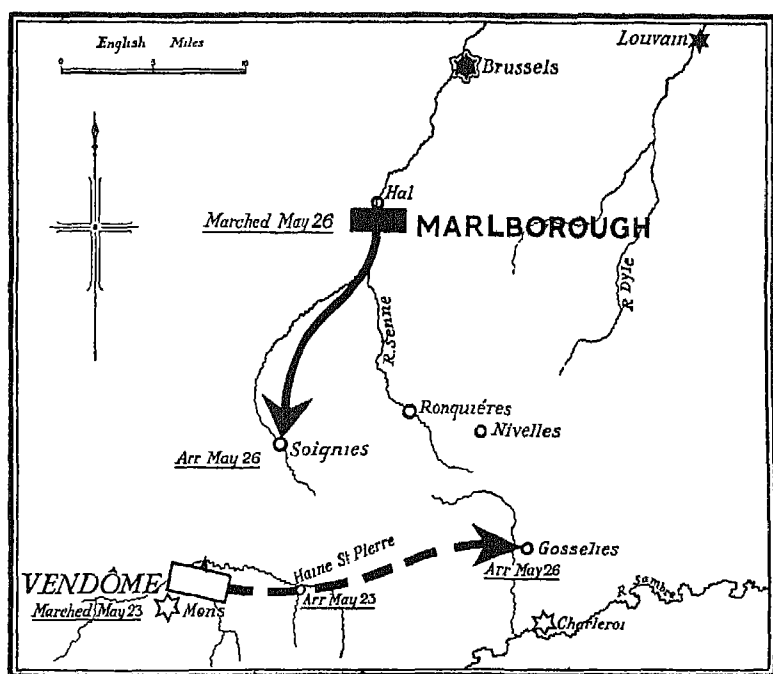
MAY 1707

need. Marlborough, on the other hand, had to cover several important but poorly fortified towns, especially Brussels. He had thought earlier of making a dash for Mons or Tournai before Vendôme was ready. His journey to see the King of Sweden had prevented this, and the moment had now passed. He was too far outnumbered to undertake a siege, and must content himself with covering Brabant, hoping for a chance of battle on favourable terms. All his letters show him anxious for battle, though not at undue risk. The Dutch had instructed their field Deputies that they were not to allow a battle. He was careful "not to let the army know that the Dutch are not willing to venture, since that must have an

<sup>1</sup> Pelet, vii, 299.

## ALMANZA AND STOLLHOFEN

ill effect.”<sup>1</sup> He tried to obtain some latitude by assuring Heinsius that he would not fight except at a marked advantage. The Dutch Government only enjoined more strict caution upon their Deputies. Marlborough was thus thrown back into the conditions he had found intolerable in previous



MOVEMENTS, MAY 23--26

campaigns. He had to create a situation where the superior enemy were at great disadvantage, and where at the same time the Dutch had no option but to fight. This double problem was incapable of solution. Thus unhappily circumstanced, he took the field.

At midnight on May 25, after he had ordered the army to march the next day to Soignies, his spies reported that the French were also to move forward at daybreak. These movements brought the two great armies into critical

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 210.

## MARLBOROUGH

relation. On the 27th Marlborough, taking with him the field Deputies, made a reconnaissance in force towards the enemy but failed to find them. They had in fact moved eastward to Gosselies, where they formed a strong camp. This was not known till late in the day. The French movement deliberately uncovered the fortress of Mons, as if to challenge its siege. Had the Allies attempted this, Brussels, Louvain, and, indeed, all Brabant would have been exposed. The choice remained of moving eastward across the Senne to converge upon the enemy with the chance of battle, or of retracing the marches along the Brussels road and standing between him and Brabant. A council of war debated the question. Marlborough proposed to remain where he was, and send a detachment to demolish the abandoned French lines before Mons. Evidently he wished to lead Vendôme to believe that he was about to commit the error which the Marshal's movement had invited. Upon this pretence he would await Vendôme's next move. The general opinion was against this apparent adoption of an unsound policy.

According to Goslinga, Marlborough then proposed to retire on Brussels. At this the Deputies, supported by many of the generals, Dutch and English, raised an outcry. A sudden retreat at the very opening of the campaign would be injurious to the prestige and morale of the army ; it would give the French, already comforted by Almanza, exactly the tonic they required. The council wished to cross the Senne and march on Nivelles. Marlborough consented to this, and orders were issued accordingly. Goslinga slept in his boots, expecting to move at two A.M. But at three o'clock he could hear no movement in the headquarters, and at four he learned that Marlborough had changed the plan and persuaded Overkirk, and that the army would fall back on Brussels. The reason given was that Cadogan had personally reconnoitred the passage of the Senne at Ronquières, and found it both occupied and difficult. The other passage was even less satisfactory. There was therefore no alternative but the "humiliating" withdrawal, which was, in fact, in full progress. Obviously Marlborough was doing what

## ALMANZA AND STOLLHOFEN

he chose, and finding facts and excuses to baffle the contrary argument. Filled with wrath at what he calls *cette foute demarche*, 'the fiery, opinionated Dutchman mounted his horse and accosted the Captain-General during the march : "I used full freedom in thrusting before the Duke face to face [*entre quatre yeux*] how much this ignominious retreat at the opening of the campaign would stain his fine reputation, raise that of the Duke of Vendôme, and reanimate the cast-down courage of the French soldiers. He said little in response [*pas grande chose*]; but persisted in his course." Such is Goslinga's tale.

On the other hand we have Marlborough's letter written to Godolphin on May 30, while the facts were well known to the principal officers of the army :

This caution of mine is absolutely necessary ; for instead of coming to this camp I would have marched yesterday to Nivelles, but the Deputies would not consent to it, telling me very plainly that they feared the consequence of that march might be a battle. So that unless I can convince the Pensioner that I am not for hazarding, but when we have an advantage, they will give such orders to their Deputies that I shall not have it in my power of doing good, if an advantage should offer itself. . . .<sup>1</sup>

There is thus a conflict between Goslinga's retrospective memoirs and Marlborough's report written at the time to Godolphin ; but the explanation of Marlborough's decision seems plain. Had he possessed the powers which are the right of every commander of an army, he would have marched to meet Vendôme through Nivelles after encouraging him to commit himself more deeply by a feint by Mons ; and perhaps the chance of battle would have come. But it was not primarily against Vendôme that he was in this instance manœuvring. He hoped that this super-prudent retreat, and the heart-burnings it caused to the Dutch field Deputies and generals, would convince Heinsius of his extreme cautiousness, and procure him the freedom without which it was not possible to handle an army with success. If he gained that freedom from his friends, and if

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, III, 209.

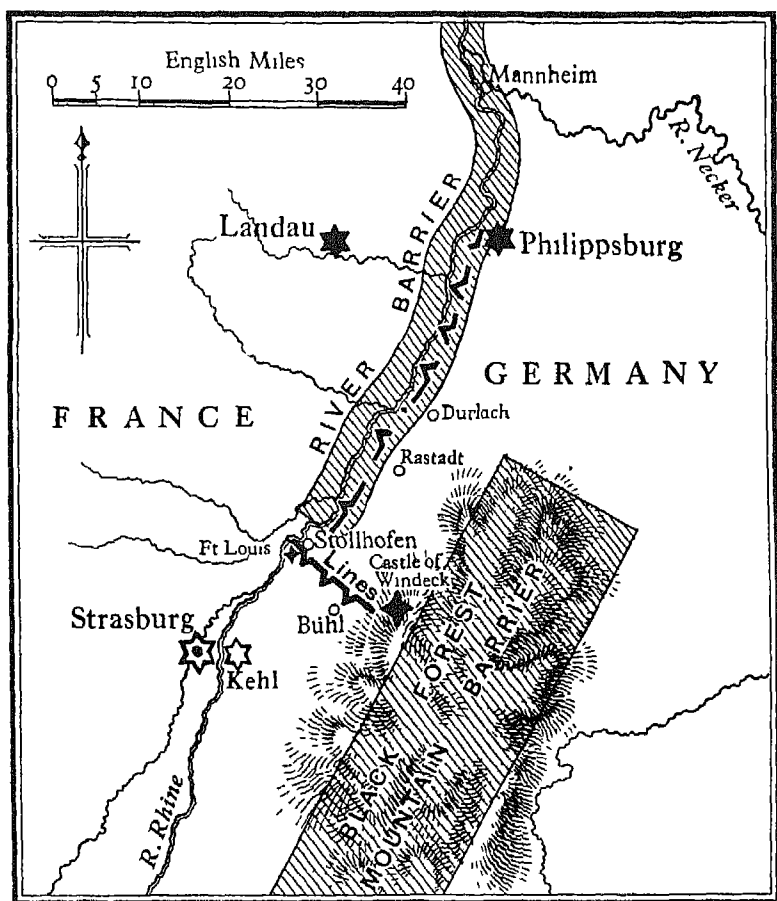
## MARLBOROUGH

the enemy, inflamed by his apparent weakness, would "grow insolent," then something might be made of the campaign. Meanwhile he had no intention of forcing the Senne and bringing about a situation where he could offer battle, when he knew that at the culminating moment the Deputies would produce their written instructions to veto such hazards. As the somewhat cietfallen confederates passed by Brussels and their columns bent eastward towards the Dyle and their former fighting-grounds, the news of a second major disaster reached Marlborough. The Lines of Stollhofen had been captured by Marshal Villars.

Prince Louis of Baden was dead, and the Margrave of Bayreuth, appointed by Vienna because, though a bad general, he was a good Catholic, led the armies of Germany in his stead. Prince Louis had left behind as his monument that renowned system of defences upon the Upper Rhine known as the Lines of Stollhofen. It had become a joke in the armies that the late Prince's whole conception of the world war was the defence of the Lines of Stollhofen. He had originally expected to command on the Rhine the hundred and twenty thousand Imperial troops which had been promised by the old Emperor in the treaty of the Grand Alliance. These had not appeared; but as the successive campaigns passed with their twists of fortune Prince Louis when in doubt had always persevered in the fortification of his lines. In fact, it was said that in exact proportion as the military strength of Germany diminished so his fortifications grew. They had never been more impressive than in the spring of 1707. From the impassable mountains of the Black Forest to Fort Louis stretched the double and triple lines of bastions, redans, redoubts, trenches, strong points, inundations, marshes, which had hitherto in the War of Succession effectively prevented all invasion of Germany along the Rhine valley. Now, after the Margrave had been driven out of Alsace, the defences had been perfected along the whole course of the river to the fortresses of Landau and Philippsburg. Counting round the angle of Fort Louis, these fifty or sixty miles of elaborate earthworks

## ALMANZA AND STOLLHOFEN

and water-shields constituted the finest manifestation of passive defence which war in those times had seen. Within them stood the ragged remnants of the Emperor's Rhine army,



THE LINES OF STOLLHOFEN

recently stripped and stinted for the sake of the expedition to Naples. Behind them lay Germany, defenceless, disunited, but, thanks to the Sea Powers, to Blenheim and Ramillies, hitherto unravaged. But behind them also had risen at Rastadt the magnificent palace and gardens of the late Margrave, on which he had lavished hundreds of thousands

## MARLBOROUGH

of pounds, and by which he proclaimed his confidence that his lines were inexpugnable. The mercy of God, manifested through his toe, had laid him in his tomb before the striking of the fatal hour.

Marlborough's accurate Secret Service, and his own military instinct, had led him to fear some sudden stroke by Villars on the Rhine. Already from St James's on March 18 he had sent a plain warning. "I am glad," he wrote to M. de Janus,<sup>1</sup> "that you are beginning to settle down in your quarters. It is reported, however, from France that M. de Villars seems to have some project in view which he would explode [*ferait éclater*] at the first chance; but I do not doubt that all necessary precautions will be taken on your side to frustrate it [*le faire avorter*]." <sup>2</sup> No notice had been taken by the Margrave of Bayreuth's headquarters, although nearly two months had passed.

On the night of May 22 Marshal Villars gave a grand ball at Strasburg. This festivity and its date had become widely known. The news had crossed the gulf between the armies, and upon the staff of the new Commander-in-Chief, the Prince of Bayreuth, entire confidence prevailed. But while Villars arranged his general officers in the minuet, their troops, mobilized with the utmost stealth, were marching fast, and when they received their orders from him in the ballroom they rode off to play their parts in a great surprise. The famous lines which for five years had protected the German Fatherland were overrun at numerous points without loss of life, almost without the firing of a shot. The most impregnable section, between the river and the mountains, was the first to fall. The French clambered in succession over tiers of permanent defences. The Reich troops fled in disorder towards Durlach, and Villars fixed his headquarters in the palace and castle of Rastadt on the evening of the 23rd. By then the entire system of defence which had hitherto served Central Germany in the place of an army was in French hands. The roadway into Germany was now barred neither by ramparts nor soldiers. The dyke had broken, and the

<sup>1</sup> Chief Staff Officer of the Rhine Army.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 336.

## ALMANZA AND STOLLHOFEN

bitter waters flowed onward in a deluge. This was no more than the Germanic states deserved for their meanness to the Empire, and the Empire for its incompetence. Fortune committed an injustice when the main penalty was paid by the Circles of Swabia and Franconia, which had done the most to defend their country.

Such was the opening of the campaign of 1707. In a trice the entire face of the war had changed. In Italy an improvident separate peace; in Spain a shattering defeat; in Germany unstemmed invasion; in Flanders deadlock and veto. There remained Marlborough's hope: Eugene and Toulon.



## CHAPTER XIV

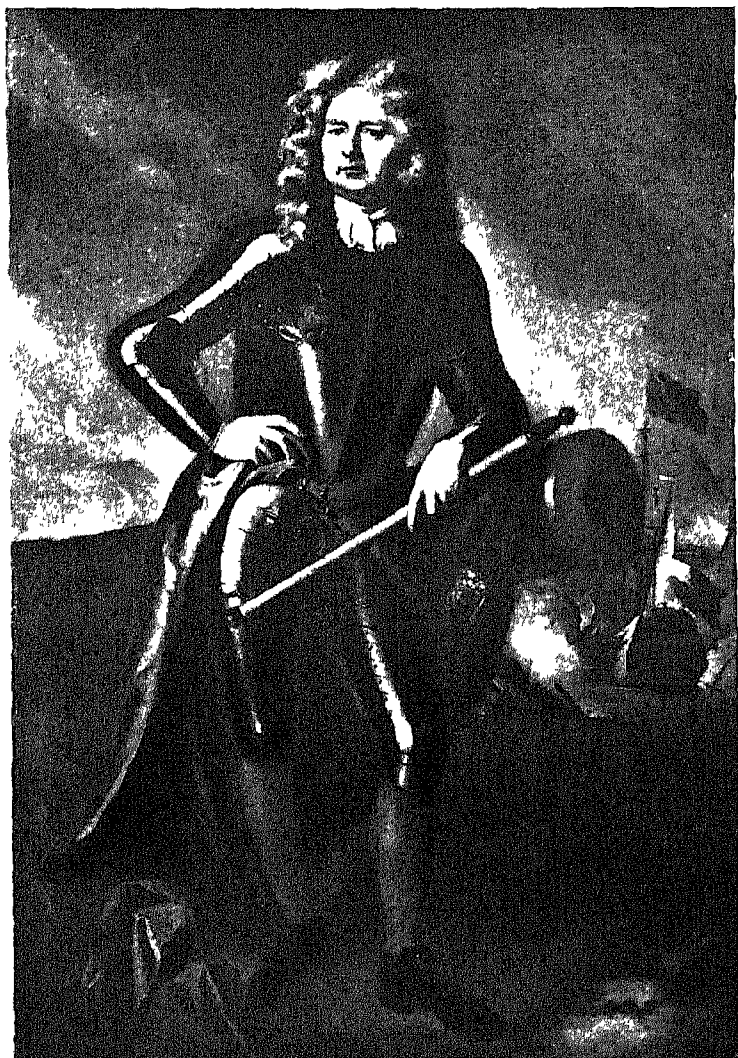
### TOULON

1707,  
Summer

THE attack upon Toulon in 1707 was one of the greatest naval enterprises ever undertaken by England. Marlborough's power and the whole authority of the Government sustained the Fleet. They found in Sir Cloudesley Shovell an admiral who brought to the enterprise a strong surge of his own. Marlborough understood from his youthful service afloat the difficulties and uncertainties of sea war. There was no need to tell him, as Shovell was at pains to explain to Victor Amadeus, that the Navy sometimes took three weeks or a month to arrive at a place which they might with a fair wind reach in twenty-four hours. Marlborough realized what Napoleon would never believe until Trafalgar—that a land commander cannot drive a fleet. Admiral Shovell was, however, from the outset as keen and convinced as Marlborough about taking Toulon. He saw the profit to the naval war of securing this excellent Mediterranean base. He saw from his quarterdeck across the short, wind-whipped seas of the Gulf of Lions exactly what Marlborough saw in his headquarters at Meldert—the destruction of the French fleet and its base, and the command of the Mediterranean for England during the war and perhaps longer. Both Shovell and Admiral Norris, his representative in the Duke of Savoy's army, also comprehended the strategic consequences upon the whole struggle of the organized invasion of Southern France from a conquered Toulon and an English-dominated Mediterranean.

Peterborough had written in 1705 a description of Shovell which certainly seems borne out by his conduct before Toulon.

\*Sir Cloudesley Shovell is a man possessed of many good qualities. . . . He is brave if I may say to a fault, and in matters

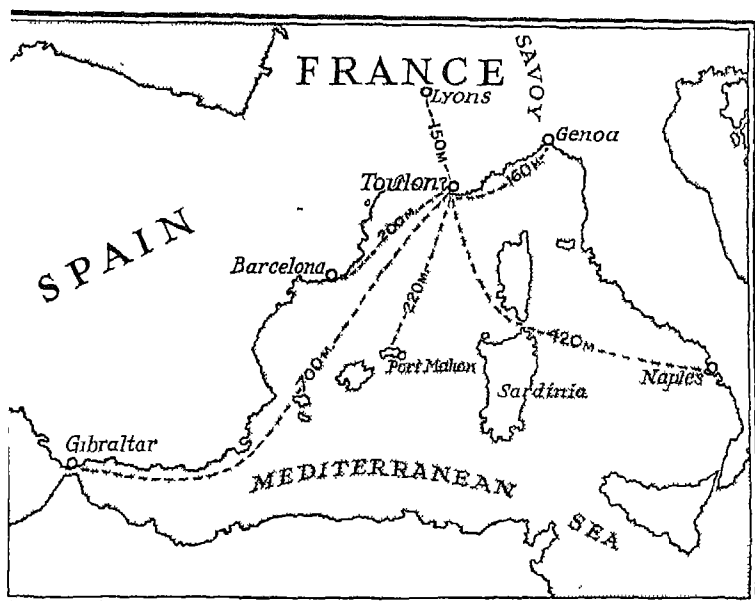


SIR CLOUDESLEY SHOVELL  
Michael Dahl  
*National Portrait Gallery*



## TOULON

he does not understand thinks that whatever is directed first must be begun, and when begun must be carried on what accidents soever occur, or whatsoever improbabilities come in the way. He sticks close to what he calls orders, and will conceive no latitude in such instructions that I think were calculated for the greatest.<sup>1</sup>



STRATEGIC SITUATION OF TOULON

Marlborough ceaselessly urged the attack upon Toulon. The disasters at Almanza and Stollhofen only increased its importance in his eyes. "Our greatest hope is on the Italian front, although the expedition to Naples in which they [the Imperialists] are persisting with so much obstinacy may cause much difficulty."<sup>2</sup> To Admiral Norris, on June 5, "You will have heard of our misfortune upon the Rhine. Our chief hopes are from the projects on your side, wherein I am confident nothing will be wanting on the part of our fleet."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peterborough to Godolphin, September 9, 1705; Add MSS. 39,757.

<sup>2</sup> Marlborough to Noyelles, June 3; *Dispatches*, iii, 388.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

## MARLBOROUGH

To Wratislaw, "England and Holland base all their hopes on the Italian plan and are convinced that the whole future of the campaign and even of the war depends upon it." To Sinzendorf, the Imperial Ambassador at The Hague, on June 6, "The maritime powers have set their hearts upon the entry into France, and it is there that they expect the greatest fortune that can come to the high allies to restore our affairs."<sup>1</sup> Chetwynd, the English Minister to the Court of Savoy, kept Marlborough constantly informed.

### *Chetwynd to Marlborough*

24 May, 1707

\* Lord Peterborough is still here as inquisitive as anybody else, but Your Grace may depend upon it he will know nothing from myself nor anyone else, none knowing of the matter. . . . I hope your letters to the Court of Vienna after the news of our misfortunes will oblige the Emperor to countermand the troops who are on their march for Naples. This will make the enemy believe our real designs are to send the troops to Spain, and would be the only way to recover our late misfortune.<sup>2</sup>

To Chetwynd Marlborough wrote on June 8 :

I find the only difficulty you are like to labour under is the want of ball and powder, concerning which you will certainly have orders immediately from England, whither I had written that though the provision were never so great, it can be no prejudice, since what is not used will remain in store. In the mean time the service must not be delayed for want ; the fleet will certainly furnish a good quantity of powder besides ball for their own guns, and in my opinion it would not be amiss that care were taken to secure a quantity of ball of the same calibre, and some powder at Genoa and Leghorn, as you propose ; . . . if you stay for orders or a supply from England, if it be not already sent, the time for operations will be lost ; and I must tell you the greatest hope we have for the campaign . . . is from your side.<sup>3</sup>

Although the nominal command rested with the Duke of Savoy, everything turned upon Eugene. Eugene, as we shall

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 392.

<sup>2</sup> *Blenheim MSS.*

<sup>3</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 399.

## TOULON

have further occasion to remark, was a land animal, a denizen of Central Europe. He did not understand the sea; what he knew of it he disliked and distrusted. He had no comprehension of amphibious strategy. But the attitude of the Vienna Government with which he was himself bound up also reacted upon him. He knew they had been forced into the plan by Marlborough. The Empire had no army of its own worthy of the name in Italy. It was as feeble and ragged on the Po as on the Rhine. But twenty-eight thousand Germanic troops, to be revived by the Sea Powers with nearly fifteen thousand recruits, were a force upon which they might ride, if not to victory in the South of France, at least to annexation in the South of Italy. The threat of withdrawing these twenty-eight thousand northern soldiers had compelled them to consent to the Toulon enterprise. They resented both the menace and the task; and Eugene to some extent shared their mood. Thus we see before Toulon a Prince Eugene different from any of the gleaming pictures with which he illuminated the warfare of his age. We shall show how in 1708 Marlborough, worn down, leaned upon Eugene and was in a dark hour sustained by him; but now in 1707 it must stand on record that the ever-glorious prince and warrior who with his own dauntless heart constituted the fighting power of the Holy Roman Empire allowed himself to fall below the level of the event.

We therefore have the spectacle of Marlborough inspiring Shovell, and Shovell trying to animate Eugene: of a half-hearted military command and an overflowing fleet stimulus. Shovell was obliged by the agreement to furnish large specified quantities of powder and shot. But he never considered these limits. He would land more than a hundred guns for the siege. Most of his marines had been dropped in Spain to plug the gap of Almanza; but he proffered his seamen. Forty rounds a gun was considered the lowest reserve tolerable in an English fleet; Shovell cut it down to thirty-five without express authority. Acting on Marlborough's suggestion, he sent to Leghorn and Genoa to purchase ammunition. He pledged his own personal credit pending sanction from the

## MARLBOROUGH

Treasury. Throughout the operation the Navy never failed to give more material aid than was contracted beforehand or asked under necessity. The spirit of the Admiral and his stubborn, audacious counsels thrust themselves upon the Duke of Savoy and still more upon Prince Eugene. At every moment he was at hand to aid, to encourage, to reassure. In our history the Navy has sometimes stood by to watch the Army do the work. Here was a case where a navy tried by its exertion and sacrifice to drive forward an army. It did not succeed.

Marlborough's wish and endeavour were to begin the advance against Toulon in early May. But many insuperable obstacles intervened. The snow melted late upon the passes; both the Imperialists and the Duke of Savoy were behindhand with their preparations; and even the allied fleet, delayed in Spain, did not "come on to the coast" till the middle of June. In spite of this and of the lengthy and embittered discussions between the Allies, no hint of the Toulon plan had reached Versailles till June 10, when it was reported that Eugene would shortly march on Nice. It was the end of the month before it was recognized that Toulon was the allied aim, and that Provence and not Dauphiné was threatened. Marlborough's Secret Service gives the date as precisely as the French records. "The French," he wrote to Chetwynd on July 1, "seem to have penetrated our grand design, so that the longer it is delayed the greater the difficulty you must expect."<sup>1</sup> Toulon was at this moment an easy prey. Its defences were neglected; its garrison less than eight thousand men. Forthwith Marshal Tessé, leaving the forces on the coast to delay the advance, began to concentrate all his available troops upon Toulon, and set to work to fortify an extended position north-east of the city.

Eugene, having feinted at Susa, began his march on June 30 with about thirty-five thousand men. Of these scarcely a sixth were provided by the Empire. Over eight thousand Imperialists under General Daun, the defender of Turin, were slowly wending their way down the leg of Italy towards Naples amid the protests of the Papal States. The first charge on

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, 450.

## TOULON

whatever recruits, supplies, and transport the Empire could procure had been for Naples. All the engagements which the Imperial Ministers had signed with the Sea Powers, particularly England, about the supplies of food, powder, shot, mules and horses, had hopelessly collapsed. Every attempt to borrow money on the Imperial credit had failed. Eugene's letters to the Emperor are a painful exposure of military and financial prostration.<sup>1</sup> On his side, however, stood the redoubtable German mercenaries of the Sea Powers. There were the ardent Savoyards who followed their Duke; and there was the fleet and Sir Cloudesley Shovell, upon whom all burdens could be thrown, and by whom nearly all were accepted.

Up till the last moment Eugene and the Government he served hugged the hope that they would persuade the Sea Powers to abandon the attempt and to send five thousand of their paid troops to Spain. Eugene mooted this to Shovell. The Admiral, supported by the representatives of England and Holland, flatly refused to consider such a desertion, and as they were the masters of the men, ships, and money it could not be pursued. The disputations with Vienna about Toulon were continued by the London Cabinet. The Imperial Ministers made unceasing complaint. "We risk our army," wrote Wratislaw to Marlborough on July 13, "in the sole view of pleasing England." "Had they ever," scornfully exclaimed Godolphin, "had Italy or an army, but for the extraordinary efforts and expenses of England?"<sup>2</sup>

One feature long unknown to Marlborough and the Allies must be noticed here. Lamberty tells a story of secret Swedish intervention at Turin at the instance of the French envoy to Charles XII.<sup>3</sup> The Swedish King is said to have brought decisive pressure to bear upon Victor Amadeus to frustrate the attack upon Toulon. The King of Sweden had, it seems, been under a ten-years secret alliance with France. This engagement was limited to mutual aid only in the event of mortal danger. Charles XII recognized such danger in

<sup>1</sup> Eugene to the Emperor, Gosselo, July 8; *Feldzüge*, vii, Suppt., 72.

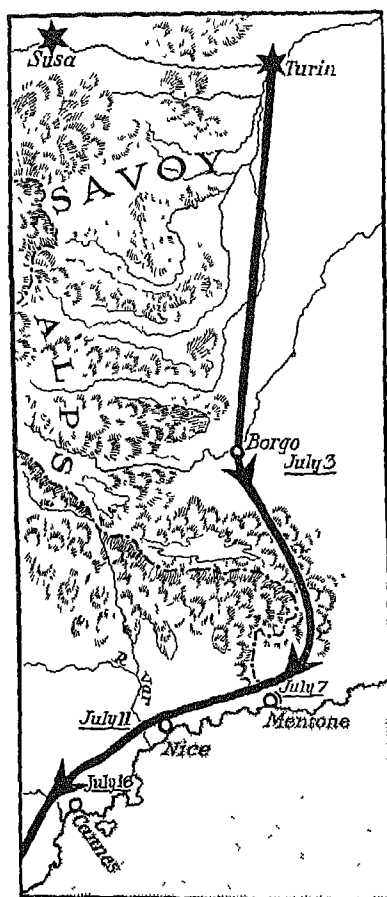
<sup>2</sup> Coxé, iii, 112.

<sup>3</sup> Lamberty, iv, 369.



## MARLBOROUGH

the fall of Toulon. His treaty with France did not expire till the end of 1708. It is alleged that he told the Duke of Savoy's agent that if Toulon fell he would invade the



EUGENE'S MARCH TO TOULON (1)

Empire. If the Allies invaded Dauphiné or Provence he and his Swedes would winter in Saxony and Bohemia. At the same time Marshal Villars, who was already across the Rhine ravaging Swabia and Franconia, made vehement appeal to the Swedish King to join hands with him, and consummate the destruction of the Hapsburg power; and anyone can see how fatal such a combination would have been. Victor Amadeus, it is suggested, deliberately spoiled the Toulon expedition. His apologists present him as being willing to bear silently and secretly all the odium of military treachery committed out of loyalty to the common cause.

It was under these depressing auspices that Eugene came down through the Alps, reached the sea, and marched along the Riviera through Nice and Cannes. The pic-

ture presented to modern eyes of shores lined with endless pleasure cities, villas, and gardens, and striped with mighty causeways at every level, affords no suggestion of the stern country that confronted Prince Eugene. Only one ill-kept road wound its way across the innumerable spurs and water-

## TOULON

courses with which the mountains meet the sparkling sea. Primitive hamlets of goatherds or fisher-folk offered neither food nor shelter to an army. Small, impoverished coastal towns, few and far between, scowled from amid their fortifications upon open roadsteads, with here and there perhaps a jetty or a quay ; and the Mediterranean, for all its smiles, afflicted a sailing fleet with constant uncertainty and frequent peril.

Wishing to be informed by an eye whose measure he knew well, Marlborough now sent Brigadier Palmes, the young cavalry officer who had distinguished himself at Blenheim, "to the Duke of Savoy and Prince Eugene with orders to stay there till they can judge how the campaign will end on that side, and then to have their thoughts on a project for the next campaign. . . . I expect him back about the middle of September." <sup>1</sup> The importance of this liaison appointment is shown by the fact that the Queen's sanction was officially obtained. Thus Palmes was more than Marlborough's personal representative.

On July 11 Eugene came in contact with the French delaying force in redoubts behind the Var. The English fleet with its Dutch squadron had kept pace with the army. Shovell now stood in, and four ships of the line, one of seventy guns, sailed into the mouth of the river and bombarded in flank the seaward works. These, speedily abandoned, were occupied by landing parties of seamen, while at the same time the advanced troops of Eugene's army forced the passage inland.

### *Chetwynd to Marlborough*

July 15, 1707

\* Yesterday His R.H. and Prince Eugene were on board the flagship where it was resolved to march straight to Toulon in order to besiege that place, upon the assurances Sir Cloudsley gave his R.H. and the Prince of leaving the Fleet in Toulon all the winter if we could take it, and upon those I gave them of her Majesty's vigorous assistance to support His R.H. in all

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough to Godolphin, August 1 ; Coxe, iii, 296.

## MARLBOROUGH

his just designs. [This] was absolutely necessary to calm the fears they had of leaving Antibes, Villa Franca and Monaco behind them and to determine them to begin with Toulon. In this I hope we have acted according to the Queen's intentions. . . . All our advices say that the enemy are sending troops from all sides to oppose us, and I find our two great men are afraid they shall have enough to do . . . to keep their ground should we take Toulon, since we shall run the risk of losing all communications except by sea. His R.H. and Prince Eugene desire Your Grace will send them a courier with accounts of what troops the enemy may detach from the Rhine, which is what they are most afraid of.<sup>1</sup>

### *Eugene to Marlborough*

St LAURENS

July 14, 1707

\* We are about to march now straight for Toulon with the intention of besieging it unless we meet such obstacles as will make the enterprise completely impracticable, leaving in our rear all the other strong places. You will be able to judge by our having set aside all difficulties, the eagerness of my zeal for the august desires of the Queen and for the good of the common cause, and will believe that the army is united upon the same goal. Since you have much at heart the success of this important expedition on which depend such essential consequences, I am persuaded that you will also wish to contribute to it by all means in your power, employing all your efforts to force vigorous action on the offensive of your front to cause considerable diversions, and prevent the enemy augmenting their forces against us by detachments from all parts—especially the Rhine. That is what I beg you most earnestly, and I refer to what I have written more in detail to Comte Maffei. I renew my most sincere protestations of friendship to you. . . .<sup>2</sup>

This letter is signed "Your affectionate Cousin."

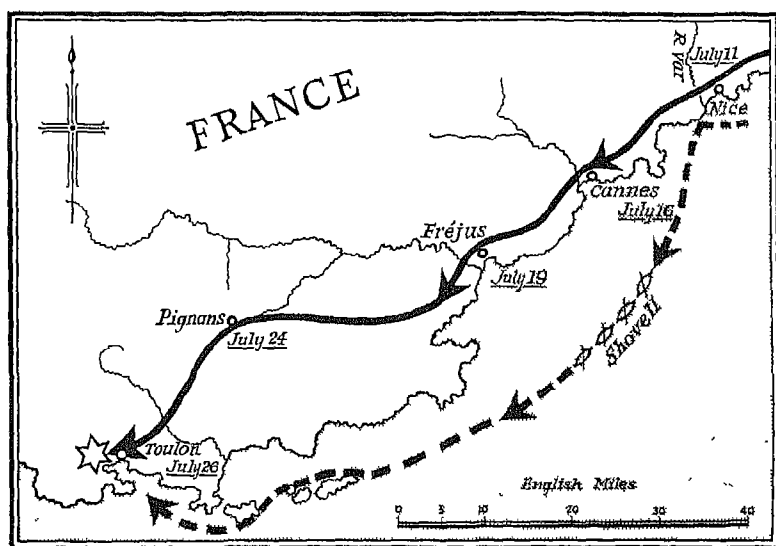
After the Var only seventy miles now stood between the Allies and Toulon. For an army whose artillery and supplies were largely carried by sea a week's marching should have sufficed. Actually a fortnight was consumed. \* "It was the

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## TOULON

opinion of almost every officer," wrote Chetwynd to Marlborough a month later, "that if before coming to Toulon, we had not been so dilatory and cautious, we might have done a great deal."<sup>1</sup> It was not until July 26 that the allied army and fleet arrived before Tessé's new lines at Toulon. The Marshal had managed to gather about twenty thousand men for their defence, the last of whom only reached their position some days after the Allies.



EUGENE'S MARCH TO TOULON (II)

Now came the crux. The Admiral proposed the immediate storm of the newly constructed and still only partially garrisoned defences. Victor Amadeus appeared favourable, but, though nominally in chief command, he threw the burden upon Prince Eugene. A year before he and Eugene with barely twenty thousand men had not hesitated to attack the French lines before Turin, although there were on the spot or in the neighbourhood more than fifty thousand enemy troops. At Toulon these proportions were almost reversed. There were the same Prussians, Hanoverians, and Saxe-

August 14, 1707; Blenheim MSS.

## MARLBOROUGH

Gothas—all at their full strength. There was now besides the mighty fleet: fifty battleships with a score of ancillary vessels. Moreover, every day's delay meant the arrival of French reinforcements and the strengthening of their fortifications. Should the signal be given?

Eugene refused. All the dislike he had for the enterprise, all his misgivings, broke forth. The place was no longer lightly defended. The enemy were there in strength. Surprise had miscarried. Prudence commanded immediate retreat before the army was cut off from Italy by a French descent through a choice of passes upon its communications. A council was held at headquarters. Shovell reacted vigorously. He renewed the assurances he had already given at Nice. Why fear for the line of supply? He would feed the army from the sea. Why fear for the line of retreat? The cavalry could ride away, and he would embark all the infantry in his ships and land them on the Italy side of any intercepting position which the French might occupy. Grave, tense debate! Finally a compromise; no grand onslaught, but an attack upon the lines by bombardment and local assaults. Trenches were accordingly opened, and a dead-lift effort began.

### *Chetwynd to Marlborough*

July 29, 1707

\* I have had the honour to see His Highness [the Duke of Savoy], who has returned from the post that was to be attacked this morning, far from being satisfied with his day's work and of the dispositions made there. From the conversations he has had with Prince Eugene I find he [Eugene] has little hopes of our succeeding here. I cannot tell what to make of all this and much less what the Prince could mean. I know he never had a liking for this project, but I thought when he was here he would have acted with his usual vigour. How this will end God knows, but I have yet reason to fear it will not be to our satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

The section of the defences resting upon the height of St Catherine was stormed on July 30, not without severe casualties, and a first parallel of the attacking works was completed by August 7.

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

## TOULON

Eugene's outlook and feelings are exposed in his letter to Wratislaw of August 4 :

. . . What you write to the Duke of Marlborough is just. With regard to myself, I will go wherever they wish me, if I have an army ; *and I declare that I will no longer be subaltern*, except to my masters, unless conjunctures should oblige me to pass the winter in this country, of which I am very doubtful.

The Duke [of Savoy], with his usual policy, seeing the great difficulties, not to say impossibilities, of this operation, throws it entirely on me, *in order not to disgust England and Holland, who press him extremely*, without listening to any reason. He does it with the more cunning, because he praises me on my capacity, and says I can do what I will. He answers them on everything that they must address themselves to me, that he is much inclined to this operation, that he knows the consequence of it, but that he can do nothing, which I do not deem proper.

They are all enraged with me, and think that I wish not to risk the troops. I answer clearly that I am accustomed to act according to the rules and reasons of war, every one knowing that I readily hazard when I have the least appearance of succeeding ; and that I shall not, from complaisance for England, *and for a little envoy [un petit d'Envoyé]* who is here [Chetwynd], advise a thing if I see it impossible ; but that if, in spite of all, the Allies and the Duke will have it so, the troops of the Emperor will not abandon them, and that I will omit nothing to succeed.

This is the state in which we are. By the journal and my relation you will see the detail. It is the most difficult operation I have seen in my life. We are working at the batteries ; we will see the effect of them before we decide on a bombardment or a siege—at least, this is my sentiment.

I do not doubt that strong detachments will arrive on all sides, the enemy having repassed the Rhine in Germany, being retired into quarters of refreshment in Spain, and the armies of Flanders inactive.<sup>1</sup>

Properly speaking, it was no siege, but only an attack by the fleet and one field army upon the fortified position of another. Eugene, whose sentiments are only too apparent, bent to his task against his mood and judgment in fulfilment

<sup>1</sup> Coxé, iii, 349.

## MARLBOROUGH

of his promise to Marlborough "that he would do his best." Besides this, however, he formed a certain contact, comprehensible to fighting chiefs, with Shovell and the English admirals. No soldier of high quality can be unmoved by the ardour and comradeship of the naval service in a joint operation. Eugene was evidently affected by Shovell's grit, resource, and zeal. "In spite of the representations I have made to the Admiral," he wrote to the Emperor (August 5), "he absolutely insists upon carrying on with the enterprise of Toulon. . . . If they wish to proceed to its serious undertaking in spite of all the difficulties they see with their own eyes, the troops of Your Imperial Majesty will certainly not separate from them."<sup>1</sup> And later, "Although the Admirals do not understand the land service, they refuse to listen to facts, and adhere obstinately to their opinion that for good or ill everything must be staked on the siege of Toulon. Yet the pure impossibility of this is clearly before their eyes."<sup>2</sup>

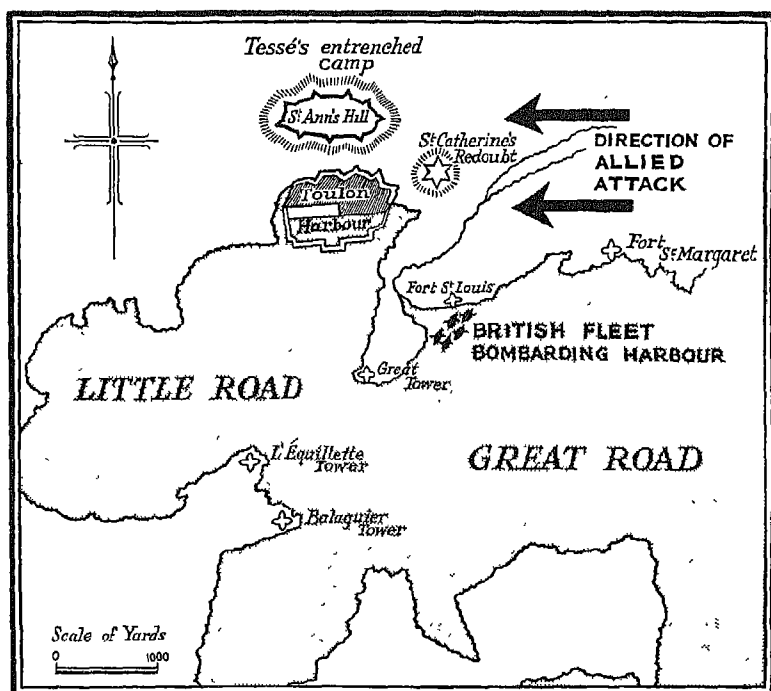
For a while the fierce and costly fighting for the outworks of Toulon flowed forth and back as the days drew into weeks, and all the bombardments of Shovell's landed cannon of the fleet could not master the adverse tide. The strategic excellence of the Toulon design made itself only the more intelligible. Louis XIV and those who sat around him could not see the deep divisions and underlying despondency in the allied camp before Toulon. What they weighed with increasing clarity were the consequences of its fall. They saw, in fact, what Marlborough had seen. They put the same value upon it as he did. Both the high centres from which the war was directed now measured with the same rod. The Versailles Council, through the difficulties of communication, were from three weeks to a month behindhand in their power of intervention. But as soon as they knew that a violent struggle was proceeding on the heights to the east of Toulon, and that the fate of the harbour hung in the balance, they laid their hands on every other theatre and clawed troops away even

<sup>1</sup> *Feldzüge*, Series I, ix, Suppt., 179.

<sup>2</sup> Eugene to the Emperor, August 14; *Feldzüge*, Series I, ix, Suppt., 182.

## TOULON

from the most urgent need. Exactly what Marlborough had foreseen and predicted happened. First of all they denuded Spain. Marshal Berwick in the full exploitation of Almanza was ordered on August 18 to gather his troops and quit the Peninsula, recross the Pyrenees, and march to the succour of Toulon. The foolish descent, prayed for by the



THE SIEGE OF TOULON

Empire, of five thousand men at Barcelona would not have shifted a French battalion out of Spain. The attack upon Toulon denuded Spain of French troops. The remnants of the allied forces were suddenly conscious that everywhere pressure upon them was relieved.

On August 15 a French counter-stroke expelled the Allies from the heights of St Catherine, which they had gained on July 30. The gallant Prince of Saxe-Gotha, who had led the right wing at Turin a year before, was killed. By the 20th



## MARLBOROUGH

it was resolved to retreat. There were the recriminations usual in failure. Eugene reveals his own vexation in his letter to the Emperor of August 20 :

Something fresh keeps cropping up with the English, whose nature is that once they have got anything into their heads they stick to it. At the moment they would like to believe that we are not really in earnest about the operation before Toulon, but, to tell the truth to Your Imperial Majesty with all submission and respect, this is sheer nonsense, suggested by the English envoy to the Duke, a young man without experience in military affairs.<sup>1</sup> Others, who have only a partial understanding of war but are more sensible, say exactly the opposite and of their own accord comprehend matters in the right way ; indeed, it might well be possible to throw blame on the English themselves because they were not prepared to seize the enemy's booms at the very first, although I represented the urgent need to do so, and offered to deal with this end myself, and to embark troops to force the other end with the assistance of the fleet.<sup>2</sup>

But all was over.

The fleet embarked the sick, wounded, and artillery in its transports. Before he sailed away Shovell determined to attack the French fleet in the dockyard basins from the sea. Battleships had already prepared the way for bombardment : they had cannonaded the batteries that prevented the approach of their vulnerable bomb vessels, and had landed men to spike the deserted guns. On August 21, the first day calm enough for bombarding, Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Dilkes anchored the flotilla of bomb-ketches near the shore. That afternoon and throughout the night under his direction they hove shells and explosive carcasses over the neck of land into the dockyard, setting ships and storehouses alight. What was thought in those days to be immense damage was done, and Toulon was shrouded in the smoke of many fires. That same night the army retreated along the coast in five columns. They were neither pursued nor intercepted. They crossed the Var on the 31st, reached Pignerol about the middle of

<sup>1</sup> Chetwynd.

<sup>2</sup> *Feldzüge*, Series I, ix, 185-186.

## TOULON

September, and with the object of securing a more favourable line of advance in another year wound up the campaign with the siege and capture of Susa.

Thus ended the memorable effort against Toulon. The design and will-power were Marlborough's and the impulse English: but nothing could prevail against the selfish divergencies of the Empire or the signs of oppression which seemed to rest throughout upon Prince Eugene. There may have been a deeper cause, but these were enough. Marlborough and the London Cabinet threw the blame upon the Empire, and never harboured or tolerated suspicions against Victor Amadeus. "You will therefore understand," wrote Marlborough to Wratislaw (October 2, 1707),

that this prince should be humoured [*ménagé*] without being allowed to dictate to us, and I don't mind telling you that I have a high opinion of his sincerity and good faith.

The voice of suspicion suggested that Marlborough's favourable view of Victor Amadeus was not entirely impartial. According to a Dutch report printed in Lamberty :

The Duke of Marlborough was not in favour of weakening His Royal Highness of Savoy, and it was because he was convinced of that Prince's wise conduct that the latter sent him a rich present. This consisted of a set of hangings of seven or eight pieces, made of gilded leather. It was very much worn, but its value was greatly increased by the paintings by the hand of Titian in the middle of each piece. These were of nude figures in diverse lewd and lascivious postures, but the parts that might offend one's delicacy were covered over. Its high value was due to the fact that it was an original which had never been copied. The King of France had in vain offered 100,000 crowns for it, to hang in his abode of pleasure called Trianon. The Duke of Marlborough had the pieces hung in the house of the English envoy Stepney [at The Hague].<sup>1</sup> On the latter's death in London about this time the Duke brought them away with him, when he crossed the Channel.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stepney, after leaving Vienna, succeeded A. Stanhope at The Hague. He died in London on September 15, 1707.

<sup>2</sup> Lamberty, iv, 598.

## MARLBOROUGH

It is far more likely that Marlborough accepted the gift than that his judgment or actions were influenced thereby. Indeed, as we shall see, he rigorously subordinated the interests of Victor Amadeus and the Savoy front to the main campaign of 1708 in Flanders.

Likewise [his letter to Wratislaw continues] I cannot quite agree with you about Toulon. You may take it from me that no Englishman will be found ever to disavow this enterprise : on the contrary, I am sure that if we had had more troops, *or had arrived five days earlier*, it was a certainty [*immanquable*].<sup>1</sup>

No one, on the other hand, must ignore the estimate of the difficulties presented on the spot by so sincere and noble a warrior as Eugene. He may well have been right that the task was impossible. It does not look in retrospect so hard as many of the feats of arms which he performed both before it and after. But it had failed, and with it failed the best hope of redeeming for the Allies the year 1707. Nevertheless good strategy even in failure often produces compensations. The secondary evils of the defeat at Almanza were avoided, and the Allies regained a fleeting control of the Peninsula. The results afloat were decisive and enduring. The French had scuttled their fleet in shallow water to save their hulls from the Allies' fire. When the time came to raise these ships again, all but a few were found to be past repair. Others were burned or fatally injured by the English and Dutch bombardment. The dockyard, its cordage-stores and factories, were largely destroyed. Never again in the War of the Spanish Succession did France attempt to dispute the English command of the Mediterranean, which has been maintained with occasional interludes up till the present day. "The war of squadrons is finished," wrote the French naval historian. "Toulon is safe ; but our Fleet is defunct." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 607.

<sup>2</sup> La Roncière, *Histoire de la marine française* (1932), vi, 395.

## CHAPTER XV

### MARLBOROUGH IN TRAMMELS

IT is hard across the gulf of time to represent the magnitude of the effort which the siege of Toulon cost Marlborough. Upon this enterprise he staked all his power to plan the next move which the Ramillies campaign had won him. It was his design. His wishes had been obeyed by the Cabinet in London, by the States-General at The Hague, by the princes of Germany so far as they were concerned or were capable of action. Even Vienna had conformed sullenly, disloyally, but still decidedly. So far as lay in his power, then so far-reaching, he had set all things moving in one direction. Was he right or wrong? Would the fall of Toulon have been the death-blow of France? Marlborough's own authority and conviction must carry the chief weight; but Louis XIV and his military circle thought the same as their opponent; and Charles XII from his entirely different standpoint arrived secretly and spontaneously at a similar conclusion. Thus the three supreme exponents of the military art were in accord upon the merits of the plan. But the cost was measureless. A year's campaign must be used; a year of political attrition at home; a year of waning comradeship throughout the Alliance. High stakes for Toulon!

1707,  
Summer

Nothing remained for Marlborough at Meldert but to await the result, and meanwhile to hold the main French army close gripped upon the Flanders front. His smaller numbers prevented him from making a siege; the Dutch veto forbade him to force a battle. There was only the faint hope that Vendôme, like Villeroy, would himself seek a decision. But Vendôme, although from his fortified camp at Gembloux he pressed various projects upon Versailles, was himself restrained from running any serious risks by Louis XIV, who was listening at this time to the cautions of the Elector Max

## MARLBOROUGH

Emmanuel. He continued to make proposals for action, and accepted his master's refusals without undue chagrin. Thus both the main armies lay motionless within a couple of marches of one another during the height of the campaigning season for more than ten weeks. When we reflect upon the poverty and rudimentary organization of the warring nations, and try to measure the daily cost of keeping these enormous forces watching each other month by month in intense readiness for battle, we may realize the waste and strain involved.

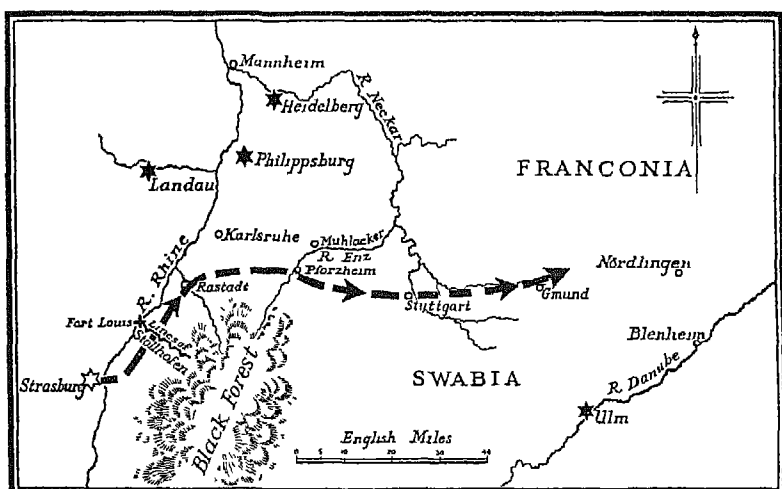
The Captain-General's letter-bag reveals the whole European scene. In the forefront stood the catastrophe upon the Rhine. The incompetent Margrave of Bayreuth had made no attempt to defend the line of the Enz. Exposing the crossing at Pforzheim, he had retired towards Muhlacker pursued by Villars with forty thousand men. Leaving detachments to demolish the famous Lines of Stollhofen, the Marshal pressed forward impetuously, unhampered by considerations of reserves, bases, siege-train, or supply columns. His aim was to burst into Germany before a militia could be collected, to grind down the defenceless Estates of the Reich, and roam through the land with colours flying, spreading terror before him. On June 8 his headquarters were at Stuttgart. From here he made it plain that the French Treasury would be replenished from the purses of German princes, nobles, burghers, and peasants. Messengers were sent in all directions to demand contributions in kind and payments in money. Threatened by fire and sword, the princes and cities of Swabia produced millions to ransom what they had neglected to defend. Advancing from Stuttgart, Villars drove the Margrave back upon Nördlingen. French raiders traversed the battlefield of Blenheim. French detachments and exactions spread throughout Franconia. There was even a possibility of the general revolt of the Bavarian countryside against the Allies.<sup>1</sup> Marlborough did what he could to stem the tide. He begged a regiment of cavalry, one of dragoons, and three battalions of infantry from the Elector Palatine. He requested

<sup>1</sup> See also von Noorden, ii, 556.

## MARLBOROUGH IN TRAMMELS

Vienna to return Danes from Bavaria, and eventually diverted Saxons who were approaching his own army.<sup>1</sup> To the Margrave of Bayreuth he wrote on June 7 :

I dare flatter myself that if all the troops Your Highness has in hand were concentrated the army of the Empire would be at least equal and perhaps superior to the enemy's forces, of which it is certain that at least half are but militia. . . . I invite Your Highness to consider whether some helpful diversion cannot be



VILLARS'S INVASION OF GERMANY

made with the numerous garrisons of Philippsburg and Landau. . . . Moreover, there would be no purpose in having such strong garrisons at such a juncture, if no use is made of them. Your Highness may well believe that if the advantage had been on our side, and we had made an irruption into their country, the French would not leave six thousand men at Strasburg with their arms folded [*les bras croisés*], as ours are at Philippsburg.<sup>2</sup>

To Harley: "If all their troops were together with a good head, they might themselves remedy this disaster."<sup>3</sup> To Wratislaw he prescribed a more personal remedy. "We were right to press you for so long a time to send a general

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 395.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>3</sup> June 6, *ibid.*, 394.

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there, I do not propose to say which ; but in the name of God do not lose a moment in getting rid of the Margrave and sending thither a general on the active list [*un général en poste*].”<sup>1</sup> And to Count Sinzendorff :

We might make you many reproaches about the disaster on the Rhine. If the least attention had been paid to the pressing requests which have been so often repeated to you to send there a general of authority, capable of commanding the troops, our affairs would not be in this vexatious condition. On the contrary, if M. de Starhemberg had been sent there in good time, the enemy would never have ventured on any undertaking, and we should perhaps have had the advantage on our side.<sup>2</sup>

To Harley (June 9) : “ If they had a good general in Germany, I am persuaded they can bring together troops enough of their own to oblige the French to retire over the Rhine.”<sup>3</sup> And to M. de Janus : “ I am sure that all Villars has beyond his sixteen thousand men are militia and local levies on which he would never dare depend.”

These extracts are typical of the authority and vigour of the correspondence which made Marlborough’s headquarters the centre of the whole Alliance. For the ten weeks of his stay at Meldert from June 1 to August 10 the more important letters printed in the *Dispatches* fill a hundred and twenty-five pages, and this takes no account of his private correspondence with Sarah and Godolphin.

The Hungarian revolt at this time had entered upon a new phase. The French Government sought to commit Rakoczy to an irreconcilable breach. Louis XIV offered him an official alliance, but only on condition that the Diet of Hungary formally deposed the Emperor Joseph I from the kingship. Rakoczy yielded to this pressure. Perhaps he had little choice. But the consequences were fatal to the rebellion. The Hungarian movement was split from top to bottom. The majority of the nation wished to secure their rights by coming to terms with their legitimate

<sup>1</sup> June 6; *Dispatches*, iii, 389.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

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ruler. His attempted deposition meant a fight to the death. The Catholic elements on the whole favoured the French view, but the Lutherans were vehemently opposed to it. Rakoczy was himself compelled to coerce Hungarian opinion by violence. A Diet was summoned to meet at Onod. The leader of the Lutherans, one of the enormous family of Okolicsany, was seized and executed, and two of his friends were murdered by Rakoczy's orders at the instigation of French officers. This event produced a profound impression throughout Hungary. The "bloody Diet of Onod," as it was called, marked the collapse of Hungarian unity. The revolt was wracked with other difficulties. The peasants of Moravia and Austria had now taken refuge in strongholds; the fields and farms were ruined. Raids were no longer profitable, and the patriot soldiers could only live by preying on their own countrymen. The demand that the Emperor should abdicate the Hungarian Throne redoubled the fury of Vienna. Marlborough, well informed as ever, held back the Sea Powers from further efforts at conciliation. Rakoczy's position became increasingly precarious, and his insurgent troops began to flinch. During 1707 the resistance of Hungary absorbed the main Imperial effort, but under that effort it steadily weakened, although its final defeat at the battle of Trentschin was not reached until the spring of the following year.

The need for a victory in Flanders became only the more apparent. Marlborough continued to coax and persuade the Pensionary Heinsius to grant him the necessary freedom to fight, without which he could only manœuvre up to a fiasco. Geldermalsen had by this time returned to the army, apparently with Marlborough's consent. His colleague Goslinga continued to cavil and malign. His charges are not obscure. Upon the retreat at the end of May from Soignies by Brussels to the camp at Meldert Goslinga says :

I made up my mind from that moment that the Duke had no intention of achieving anything in the whole campaign, and that, seeing himself deprived of the hope of ever obtaining (except in the last extremity) the agreement of the States-General to his



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governorship of Belgium, his obsession [*sa marotte*], he would drag out the war in order to checkmate us while he from time to time gave orders, and filled his purse.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, he writes on almost the same page of his memoirs :

We received in this camp positive orders from our masters to risk nothing. The reasons for these fine orders were the uncertain outcome of the Toulon expedition and the superior strength of the enemy. Geldermalsen and I, who suspected already from the Duke's entire conduct that he had no desire to accomplish much in this campaign, managed to get them kept secret until we had new ones, meanwhile explaining [to The Hague] our reasons. We foresaw that the Duke would be delighted to be able to exculpate himself for his own inaction by such orders, and would throw the blame of an abortive campaign upon the States and their deputies. Our representations were vain, and we were ordered anew to *avoid all occasions where there would be any risk of coming to an action, until the outcome of the Toulon enterprise was known or until the Duke of Vendôme had made a substantial detachment.*<sup>2</sup>

Thus we see Goslinga blaming Marlborough for sluggishness and lack of zeal against the enemy, while at the same time he had in his pocket the explicit orders of his "masters" to avoid every occasion where there would be a "risk of coming to an action" till news was received of the upshot of Toulon, which might not be for two or three months. It may be thought hard upon a general to be blamed for not fighting, and foully aspersed in his motives, by the very man whose highest function was to prevent him. Goslinga was no judge of the military possibilities. Neither was he Marlborough's channel to the Dutch authorities. The Duke suffered Goslinga with an eighteenth-century patience. He dealt with Heinsius. On the very day, June 2, when Goslinga depicts himself as deploring the veto on battles because it would give Marlborough an excuse to wriggle out of fighting and meanwhile to continue to draw his salaries, we find a hitherto unpublished letter :

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

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*Marlborough to Heinsius*

MELDERT  
June 2d, 1707

\* By the march of the Enemy to Perwis this morning, it looks as if they despair'd of gaining Bruxelles, and it is said the Siege of Huy is resolv'd; I hope You will be of opinion that this Victorious Army ought never to suffer such an affront, for shou'd we let them make that siege in quiet, the next step wou'd bee the taking of Liege, and after that be in a Condition of doing what they please. I am sure the Army is in good heart, and where ever the grownd will permit us to engage, with the blessing of God we shou'd beat them, the Consequences of which must be a good peace, which is much wish'd for. . . .<sup>1</sup>

*John to Sarah*

MELDERT  
June 13, 1707

\* But for the public good it were to be wished it [the battle] might be had, for our affairs go very ill in Germany as well as Spain, and for my part, notwithstanding the noise the French have made, I think they would less care to venture a battle than our friends; for if they had a real mind to it it must have been decided before this time. In the army I must do them right that there is all the desire imaginable to venture their lives for the publick good, but all other sorts of people on this side of the water are so very wise that I am afraid at last they will bring us to an ill peace. For myself I am old and shall not live to see the misfortunes which must happen to Christendom if the French be suffered to get the better of this warr.<sup>2</sup>

These proofs both from published and unpublished documents can be multiplied to an extent which would be wearisome. Day after day during this injurious, costly paralysis Marlborough's intimate letters to Sarah and Godolphin show him using the whole influence he had with The Hague and also with the Deputies and generals in the camp to procure freedom of action and manœuvre. In particular he pressed upon the Deputies a march to the west of Vendôme's position—a minor manœuvre which would, he declared, immediately oblige the French to retreat. Always he begged for the

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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right to fight a battle if he thought fit. He stooped to every kind of promise not to fight a general engagement unless he had undoubted advantage. But the only response was from The Hague reiterated negation to their Deputies, and from Goslinga the insertion of renewed calumnies in his diary. The Dutch Government, with the power placed in their hands by Ramillies, did not intend to jeopardize their gains. "Our friends will not venture," wrote Marlborough compendiously, "unless we have an advantage, which our enemies will be careful not to give."<sup>1</sup> They were chilled by Almanza and Stollhofen. They used the protracted operations against Toulon as a valid excuse for delay. When this was exhausted they found others, and never during the whole of 1707 did they allow the Duke more than a shadow of the freedom he had used so remarkably in the previous year.

It was said of Marlborough that he could refuse a favour with more grace than others could grant one. The business of exchanging prisoners of mark afforded many opportunities for the courteous usages of the day. He had, it will be remembered, after Ramillies given large numbers of French officer prisoners immediate leave of absence upon parole to arrange their affairs. These were bound by a code of honour, accepted throughout Europe, to return when called upon. However, there were many excuses on the grounds of ill-health, private affairs, or old friendship with the Duke. His letter to the Marquis du Plessis-Châtillon-Nonant is a model.

I have received your letter of the 8th and am indeed grieved to learn that your health is so bad, all the more because it no longer depends upon me to allow the extension of leave which you desire. All your friends will bear witness to the promptitude with which I always busy myself in meeting their wishes, but the orders which the Queen has given me to direct those whose leave is expired to surrender to their parole have quite tied my hands; thus I must await a more favourable occasion of marking the veritable esteem with which I subscribe myself.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To Harley; Bath Papers, *H.M.C.*, i, 173.

<sup>2</sup> June 20; *Dispatches*, iii, 428.

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And to the Comtesse de Lionne, who had written on behalf of her husband :

I should indeed have one of the hardest and most insensible hearts in the world were I not extremely touched by the letter you have been so good as to write me about the leave of M. le Comte de Lionne ; and what greatly increases the pain that I feel is that the remedy which you propose for your troubles no longer depends upon me ; for . . . the Queen has given me orders which entirely tie my hands, and do not permit me to give you the proof which I should wish of my sympathy in your distress ; and although I have always obeyed the Queen's orders with pleasure, it is with much regret that I execute those which concern the Comte de Lionne.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation of these stern orders from Queen Anne is found in Marlborough's letter to Harley of June 23.

Enclosed you have the copy of a letter from the French commissary wherein he proposes a general exchange of all the French prisoners we have in England, Holland, Germany, and Italy, against a like number they have lately taken in Spain. . . . As the French seem very pressing, I guess they do it in hopes of having their people to serve in their armies during this campaign, which is what we can hardly expect on our side ; and therefore I am of opinion we ought to spin out two or three months, which we may easily do before we come to any conclusion of this matter. As I find the French begin in their usual manner to be a little haughty upon their success in Spain and the number of prisoners they have taken, I have written to M. Chamillart to desire he would send over all the French general officers and others that ought to have been in England before now.<sup>2</sup>

We do not propose to complicate this chapter of misfortune in the field and all the great strategic designs that went awry or were spoiled with any account of the royal and party intrigues at home. Our concern is with Marlborough, in his camp at Meldert, waiting and longing for the good news from Toulon which his comrade Prince Eugene might presently send him, and for the consequent change in the military conditions which would render so many European, domestic,

<sup>1</sup> June 26 ; *Dispatches*, iii, 443.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

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and Cabinet perils obsolete. It is enough here that the Whigs in their anger and alarm had recourse to their usual and hitherto unfailing method of putting the screw on Godolphin, and that Godolphin poured out his troubles into Marlborough's bosom. Certainly the ten weeks of inaction at Meldert "eating and drinking," as Goslinga insolently observes about this remarkably frugal and abstemious man, "making his fortune from his pay and allowances," could not have been among the most agreeable in Marlborough's laborious life. The story of Job might well be rewritten in the terms which the historical facts of this period provide. But always there was the hope of Toulon. "I have been uneasy in my head," he wrote to Godolphin (August 4), "ever since I left off the Spa water; *but if the siege of Toulon goes prosperously, I shall be cured of all diseases except old age.*"<sup>1</sup>

The repercussion of the attack at Toulon had been protracted. Marlborough used language which spread over the high circles of the Confederate army an expectation that presently Vendôme would be ordered to send troops to Toulon. Even Goslinga records this impression. It was justified. By August 1 Louis XIV had sent peremptory orders to Vendôme to dispatch thirteen battalions and six squadrons to the southern front. As soon as this news reached Meldert Marlborough declared that the hour for action had struck. Vendôme was weakened. His superiority was gone. Marlborough demanded the right to attack him in his fortified camp at Gembloux. He appealed to The Hague. The Hague referred the matter to its Deputies and generals. Goslinga may speak for himself. "The Duke of Vendôme having at last received the order to send a large detachment to France, Milord appeared anxious to use the chance to attack the camp of the enemy, whose strength was still about equal to ours."<sup>2</sup> This should surely have been Goslinga's moment to spur the hitherto recreant Captain-General out of his lucrative inertia. But alas, all he remarks is, "This seemed risky" (*C'est ce qui paroïssoit téméraire*).

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 302.

<sup>2</sup> Goslinga, p. 35.

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Therefore he, Geldermalsen, and the Dutch generals with whom they consorted unleashed their veto. "Nothing remained," says Goslinga, "but a secret sudden march which might compel him [Vendôme] to quit his unattackable camp. This is what the Duke resolved. I may say without vanity that I encouraged him in it as much as possible, and that when he made up his mind it was to me and Geldermalsen that he first told the secret."<sup>1</sup>

Here was, in fact, the march which Marlborough had for six weeks past been suggesting to The Hague, to the Deputies and the generals. He was almost certain, through his Secret Service and from his calculations, that Vendôme would resist nothing but a frontal attack, and that a movement upon his communications would send him scurrying back towards his main fortress line. He did not hope for a decisive battle. That could only be obtained by paying the high price of a direct assault. Still, there was the chance of mauling his rearguard or his flank-guard, and once these clashes began no one could fix their limits. The Deputies deemed an attempt of this kind not barred by their instructions. After all, they could always recur to them if undue risk threatened by ordering the Dutch troops to halt or retire at any moment, which would effectually arrest the Confederate army. It seemed a good opportunity for a spirited gesture with restricted commitments. Thus on the late afternoon of August 11 the splendid army of the Sea Powers, the best and largest that Marlborough had yet commanded, sending its baggage by daylight towards Louvain as a feint, broke camp at dusk.

There ensued the second brief series of rapid movements by the great armies which marked the campaign of 1707. Marlborough, marching south-west through Wavre, reached Genappe in the afternoon of August 11.<sup>2</sup> Here he threatened to attack the left flank of Vendôme's position, or alternatively to cut him off from Mons and his fortified lines and feeding-base. Vendôme, realizing at midnight (10th/11th) what his adversary was doing, abandoned his strong camp and retreated instantly by

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> See map at p. 303.

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Gosselies towards Seneffe. The two armies therefore marched all day, converging in the same direction. But Vendôme by his promptitude in retreating kept ahead of Marlborough. The former distance of ten miles between the armies was perhaps halved, but in spite of their greater exertions no contact could be made by the Allies. The weather had suddenly become frightful; torrents of rain descended, making the few roads by which these large masses were moving most painful. Marlborough, who had intended to march early, postponed his further advance till noon to give his tired troops a rest. He reached Arquennes at six P.M. on August 12. Vendôme, who had halted when his pursuer halted, moved on again as soon as the chase was resumed, and thus kept a lead. Still the armies converged, and when the Allies reached Arquennes the French were but three miles away.

Both generals were under veto of the Dutch and French Governments respectively against wilfully fighting a battle. Marlborough's only chance was to stamp on the French rearguard. Such an event might have involved a general action. On the other hand, Vendôme, who might, if well posted and entrenched, have been ready to withstand an onslaught, was bound by his orders from Versailles to avoid this contingency if possible. Marlborough tried during the night of the 12th/13th to compromise Vendôme's rearguard. This operation miscarried, not only because of the general intentions of the French, but also by an accidental delay in the pursuit.

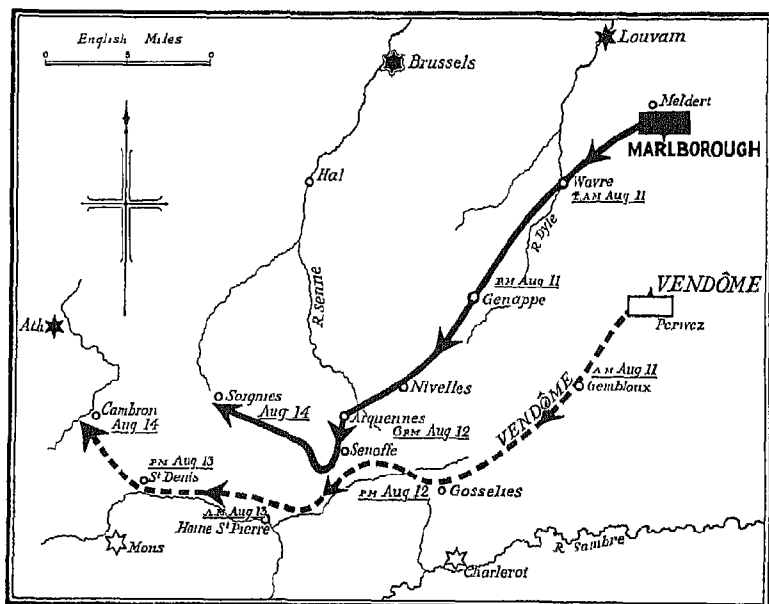
Marlborough sent written orders to Count Tilly to march with forty squadrons and five thousand grenadiers and attack the French rearguard. Count Lottum, with thirty squadrons and twenty battalions, was to support him. Tilly reached the point upon which he had been directed and opened his orders.

It rained heavily, was pitch dark, and no house near, so that it was an hour before a light could be got for him to read and know his orders, and no guides being there who knew the country and many defiles before him. It was another hour before guides were found, and, it still continuing dark and raining the whole night, he was shy to venture to march the detachment so near the

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enemy in the dark, so that in reasoning upon this the night was spent.<sup>1</sup>

Two allied squadrons who pushed on through the darkness reported at daylight the French army already in retreat under a strong rearguard of twenty-five squadrons and two thousand grenadiers. Tilly's men doubled for six miles; but the



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rearguard, using sunken roads to delay the pursuit, and withdrawing as fast as possible, got themselves out without serious ill-treatment. Thus the attempt to pin the French tail failed, and with it the last chance, if ever there had been a chance, of bringing about a battle under the limited conditions prescribed. The next two marches could not alter the relations of the armies. Vendôme moved through Haine-Saint-Pierre and on to Saint-Denis, where he was close to his fortified lines about Mons and where further chase was useless. In terrible weather Marlborough moved on August 14 to

<sup>1</sup> Cranstoun; Portland Papers, H.M.C., iv, 443.



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Soignies ; and Vendôme, resting his right wing on Mons, continued a little farther to the westward towards Ath. Both armies, exhausted and dripping, then settled down in almost the same positions they had occupied in May. Vendôme now drew reinforcements from Charleroi and Namur. Marlborough remained about Soignies, being only able in the continuous heavy rain to feed himself by the stone-paved turnpike from Brussels.

The best-known accounts of this swift, abortive manœuvre of the main armies come down to us from Goslinga and Colonel Cranstoun. Both criticize Marlborough. Goslinga complains that he did not move early enough on the morning of the 12th, and that he did not move at all on the 13th. Both he and Cranstoun say that Count Tilly was too old a man to have been entrusted with an operation that required the greatest vigour and daring. Cranstoun blames Marlborough for not having seen Count Tilly beforehand and explained to him orally what he was to do. This is one of those exceptional cases where the commander-in-chief is censured for having given written instead of verbal orders. Goslinga, of course, construes the series of events, the delayed march on the 12th, the choice of Count Tilly, and the halt on the 13th, as evidence that Marlborough did not mean to bring Vendôme to battle ; and he further assumes, though without any warrant, that he could have done so by different decisions. Marlborough's good faith is vindicated by his critic Cranstoun :

I believe most certain that no general in the world ever desired more sincerely and anxiously to fight, and to push the war in earnest than my Lord Duke does, yet by not taking all the right measures at that critical time . . . the enemy escaped out of our hands.<sup>1</sup>

And he agrees with Goslinga about Count Tilly : " An old man, and though a notable officer, yet by his age become perhaps too cautious and slow for such an enterprise."

It may well be that these strictures are valid. They do not in any way affect the main issue. Vendôme was under orders to avoid a battle, and had a good start ; Marlborough was not

<sup>1</sup> Portland Papers, *H.M.C.*, iv, 443.

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allowed to fight one unless he could bring it about inevitably. Considering that Vendôme marched light and free from all impedimenta, without pitching tents in spite of the cruel weather, and so fast that he lost four thousand straggler-prisoners, and that Marlborough carried with him all his cannon, and was clogged by the roads besides the veto, it is scarcely remarkable that there was no decision. Moreover, Vendôme could at any moment turn south towards his fortresses and bridge-heads on the Sambre at Charleroi and Maubeuge. Marlborough must therefore have been certain throughout that only by some gross error on the part of his enemy, or some piece of good luck, could he bring him to action. Vendôme committed no error, and the odd mischance fell against Marlborough. To catch Vendôme was a forlorn hope which failed.

Peterborough had accepted his dismissal from his military and naval appointments and his recall with outward nonchalance and inward wrath. He made his homeward journey in the spring of 1707 through the capitals of the Alliance. The Secretary of State lost no time in advising the various Courts that he had no commission or authority. Nevertheless Peterborough's fame, his rank, his energy of mind, his audacious personality, soon won him in most cases not merely ceremony but attention. His method was simple. He took the opposite line to the British Government on all points in dispute. He encouraged the Duke of Savoy to set his pretensions at the highest. Wratislaw he captivated by dwelling on the advantages of the Imperial expedition to Naples, which it was one of Marlborough's chief objects to prevent. Charles XII refused to receive him. Peterborough galloped after him on a groom's horse, and overtook and accosted him on the way to Altranstädt. The grim Swede listened in spite of himself.<sup>1</sup> While Marlborough's every effort was directed to turning Charles's thrust to the eastward, Peterborough of course exhorted him to remain and mediate between France and the Grand Alliance. Fortunately the King regarded him

<sup>1</sup> Besenval (an intercepted letter) ; Cox, iii, 185

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with undue contempt. In Hanover he naturally advised the Electress to press her claims to visit England. These marplot peregrinations finally brought the errant Earl to the camp at Soignies. Wratislaw had written Marlborough a highly favourable account of Peterborough's mood and quality. The Duke, who thought he had better find out what might be his intentions on reaching England, and unruffled by his vexatious conduct, sent him a ceremonious invitation. "I am willing to flatter myself," he wrote, "that your curiosity of seeing this army, as well as your friendship to me, will give me the pleasure of seeing you very quickly."<sup>1</sup>

The Almanza defeat had been a godsend to Peterborough. He was on record as having condemned beforehand the advance which had led to the disaster. Had he not denounced Galway as incompetent? And was this not now terribly proven? Had he not spent and mortgaged his private fortune in the public cause? Had he not been dismissed, as he declared, in the full flow of his genius and success? Peterborough arrived at Marlborough's headquarters with a somewhat formidable self-justification supported by "several letters and resolutions of councils of war."<sup>2</sup> He was well aware that his case would appeal to the Tory Party. Galway was obnoxious to them as a French refugee, as one of King William's importations, as a Whig *protégé*, and as a defeated general. Peterborough embodied a first-class Parliamentary quarrel, rich with facts, armed with prejudice, and touching the most irritable spots of English politics.

The English Cabinet were increasingly incensed by Peterborough's conduct. Both Secretaries of State were hot against him. Harley, in fact, wished to make him show that he had obeyed his orders, and in default to try him for misdemeanour before a common jury. "It would be better," he remarked, "to find him work to defend himself than to leave him at leisure to do mischief."<sup>3</sup> The natural logic, pedantry, and partisanship of the Whig lords sustained this temper. Marlborough saw farther ahead. He warned

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatcher*, iii, 365.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, iii, 323.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 350.

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Godolphin against the crude processes suggested by the Secretary of State. But all were agreed that Peterborough should sooner or later be invited to explain why in 1706 he had not marched to Madrid with the forces under his command; secondly, why he had not fulfilled his instructions by advancing to the King of Spain the moneys entrusted to him for that purpose; and, thirdly, why he had quitted Spain for Italy without orders, and there borrowed large sums of money for the Government on improvident terms.

The Commander-in-Chief received his guest with his customary courtesy, and listened for hours at a time to all he had to say. During ten long days the Duke surpassed himself in patience, urbanity, and reserve. His current comments are illuminating.

To Godolphin (August 15): "My lord Peterborough has been here ever since Friday, and I believe he thinks of staying some days longer." To Sarah:

Since my last we have had one continued rain so that neither the enemy nor we can stir out of our camps. I have at this time my winter clothes, and a fire in my chamber, but, what is worse, the ill weather hinders me from going abroad, so that Lord Peterborough has the opportunity of very long conversations; what is said one day the next destroys, so that I have desired him to put his thoughts in writing.<sup>1</sup>

And to Godolphin (August 18):

Lord Peterborough has said all that is possible to me, but says nothing of leaving the army. By what he tells me, he thinks he has demonstration to convince you that he has been injured in everything that has been reported to his disadvantage.<sup>2</sup>

And again to Sarah (August 25): "If Lord Peterborough should, when he comes to England, at any time write to you, pray be careful what answer you make, for sooner or later it will be in print."<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding these drab reflections, Marlborough was evidently impressed with Peterborough's case. He gave him a letter of recommendation to the English Government

<sup>1</sup> Cox, III, 320.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

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which, though studiously non-committal, ended with the decisive sentence, "As far as I am capable of judging, I verily think he has acted with great zeal."

Towards the end of August Chetwynd's reports from Toulon were gloomy. "There is not that friendship and reliance between the Duke of Savoy and Prince Eugene as should be wished, for making so great a design succeed."<sup>1</sup> Rumours of a failure in the south floated across from the French lines in Flanders. The facts gradually spread. At last the truth was known.

Marlborough bore this crowning disappointment with his usual calm. He set himself at once to minimize the evil effects, and to encourage every one. "We have no direct letters," he wrote to Count Maffei, the Savoyard Minister in London (September 5),

since those of August 13. But all the letters from France make it only too clear that His Royal Highness abandoned the siege of Toulon on the 22nd. We know nothing since of the movements of our army, which gives me some reason to hope that His Royal Highness may have had some other less difficult plan in view; at least you may comfort yourself that all accounts are agreed that His Royal Highness has acted in this enterprise with all the zeal and ardour that could be wished, after which the decision upon events must be left to God.<sup>2</sup>

And to General Rehbinden (commanding the Palatine troops in Spain) (September 7) :

We have learned from France that the Duke of Savoy has quitted the siege of Toulon and retreated, which as you may well believe has caused much chagrin after the hopes we had founded on the capture of this place.<sup>3</sup>

And to Sunderland (September 19) :

I agree entirely with you that the success the French have had is very discouraging, and if care be not taken in the manner you mention the consequences may be dangerous with Holland; for I have received very desponding letters from these parts. Either we were in the wrong in the beginning of the war, or we have

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Taylor, ii, 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, iii, 548.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 549.

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reason to continue it with vigour, or content ourselves with losing our liberties ; for the French are very insolent in success, notwithstanding their very great desire for peace.

If the Allies continue firm this winter, I am of opinion the enemy will at the entrance of the next campaign venture a battle in this country, since they see that success in any other part of the world cannot give them peace. You may be sure that I long extremely for quietness ; but at the same time I am very sensible that during this war I must continue in the galley. . . .<sup>1</sup>

During the whole summer Marlborough conducted the allied correspondence with Charles XII. He wrote repeatedly to Count Piper in order to maintain the ties established by his visit. He urged the Emperor through every channel to make the concessions which the imperious Swede demanded. During the whole summer these critical negotiations hung in the balance. They may be studied in Marlborough's dispatches and in Continental histories. Marlborough tried to keep the King of Sweden in good humour, and eventually persuaded the Emperor to sacrifice his offended pride to grave need. There were moments when he feared that nothing but force would bring Charles XII to reason. He began sombrely to consider ways and means. He let Count Piper feel that the Sea Powers had other resources besides argument and presents, and that if all else failed they would aid the Emperor to defend his territory and rights. He managed to convey this impression to the King without enraging him. It was not till September that the "hero of the North" declared himself appeased. It is significant that he waited till he had news that the siege of Toulon was definitely abandoned. The treaty was ratified on the 12th ; and on the 25th his terrifying army turned its bayonets to the east and crossed the Oder into Silesia. The Imperial Court freely attributed to Marlborough the main credit for this result. It was one of his most notable successes in diplomacy.

General Schulenburg gives us a convincing instance of Marlborough's judgment and of his comprehension, which held all Europe in its gaze. He recounts a conversation

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 367.

## MARLBOROUGH

which he had with him in 1708 in the presence of Eugene upon Charles XII's affairs. "Milord duke believes that one cannot do better than let him act exactly as he wishes in the direction of Moscow, where he could never reach his end [*venir au bout*] but will ruin himself to such an extent that he will not be able to do any more mischief, and that we shall find ourselves altogether rid of him."<sup>1</sup> It is curious that Prince Eugene, with all his knowledge of Europe, took the opposite view. He thought that "the attack upon the Czar might go too far and might well produce regrettable consequences; and that the King of Sweden at the head of forty thousand men would be able to overturn the Empire as often as he chose."<sup>2</sup>

But Marlborough was right. His measurements of men and affairs were so sure that he seems almost gifted with prophetic power. By the end of 1709 Charles XII was irretrievably ruined by the battle of Pultawa. Every word of Marlborough's had come true.

This was for the future; and it was with sorrow that the Captain-General surveyed the results of 1707. The recovery of France seemed complete in every theatre. Grievous defeats had overtaken the allied arms at Almanza and Stollhofen; cruel disappointment at Toulon. His own campaign had been fettered and ineffectual. The Empire pursued its woebegone, particularist ambitions. Southern Germany had allowed itself to be ravaged without any rally of the Teutonic princes. The Dutch, angry and disappointed, hugged their Barrier, and their grasping administration had already cost the Allies every scrap of Belgian sympathy. There had been no lack of political malice in England even after the glories of 1706. What would be the temper now when there was nothing to show but vast expense and general miscarriage? In this adversity the Confederate armies sought their winter quarters; and Marlborough returned home to face a Cabinet crisis, the Parliamentary storm, and, worst of all, a bedchamber intrigue.

<sup>1</sup> *Leben und Denkwürdigkeiten Johann Mathias Reichsgrafen von der Schulenburg* (1834), i, 340.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

## CHAPTER XVI

### ABIGAIL

SUNDERLAND'S appointment rankled in the heart of the Queen. Ignoring the straits to which her two chief Ministers were put, closing her eyes to the Parliamentary situation and the needs of Supply and War, Anne set herself to vindicate her royal authority. Her heart was estranged from Mr Montgomery and from Mrs Freeman. She listened to what they said to her on public business, and complied with all the requirements of State. But she made them feel that the tie which bound her to them was one of duress or convenience and no longer of affection. Nor did the void in the Queen's bosom remain unfilled. Who would deliver her from the Whigs? This became her obsession. The many glories of her reign, the wonderful position she now held in Europe, which was then the world, the united island, the loyal people, the lustre of immortal victories, all faded in the sullen glow of her resentment. Her search for a deliverer was not long or fruitless. Always at hand was her trusted, well-liked Secretary of State, Mr Harley. What a comfort it was to talk to him! He understood her difficult position; he sympathized with her in the oppression to which she was subjected. He never asked her to do disagreeable things. On the contrary, he made her feel how unnecessary was Godolphin's subservience to the Whigs, how wrongful and injurious were their insatiable demands. In this business of modern politics, in the House of Commons, in the party intrigues, the money votes, and all that, he was unrivalled. What he did not know about the management of the Commons was not worth knowing. He was there in the assembly which he had led or presided over so long, and could sway. Unlike Godolphin, he had a following, and it was composed of exactly those very elements, the moderate Tories,

1707,  
Summer



## MARLBOROUGH

which Anne conceived to be the true nucleus of any national Government.

Mr Freeman was always at the wars. This was necessary, because he was a wonder-worker at the head of armies. There was none like him in the whole world. It was a pity he could not be at home. If only he would protect her from the Whigs! She would not then have to listen to their hateful voices conveyed shamefacedly through the mouth of their puppet Godolphin. He would keep Sarah from making scenes, writing endless political letters, and giving her unwelcome lectures on matters far beyond the province of a woman subject. There was nothing the Queen would not do for him if in return he could only render her this reasonable and rightful service. With him at her side, all would be well; but he was abroad.

The time came when Anne addressed herself to Harley in terms which were disloyal to her principal Ministers. One day a gardener handed him a secret letter from the Queen. She appealed to him to give her his help.<sup>1</sup> No greater temptation could have been cast before an eighteenth-century statesman. Moreover, it harmonized with Harley's deep political calculations and his innate love of mystery and subterranean intrigue. Forthwith he began to organize a group out of which, with the Queen's exclusive favour, an alternative Government might be formed. He held nightly meetings with his Tory friends, with the law officer Simon Harcourt, and with the Secretary-at-War, St John, to devise a plan of action. It was obvious that this must comprise as its first decisive step the supplanting of Godolphin. But what of Marlborough? Harley was not at all sure which way Marlborough would go. He knew that, on the whole, Marlborough agreed with him, that he wished to preserve contact with the Tories, that scarcely less than the Queen he dreaded falling into the hands of the Whigs. Had not Marlborough visited the Duke of Shrewsbury, now

<sup>1</sup> We incline to the view of Herr Salomon that this incident occurred in the autumn of 1707 or early in 1708, and not in 1710, as dated by Swift. We will not burden the reader by repeating the complicated but convincing argument. (F. Salomon, *Geschichte des letzten Ministeriums Königin Annas von England, 1710-14* (1894), p. 15.)

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returned from his long self-imposed exile, and spoken to him of the tyranny of the Whig lords? This suggestive fact had been disclosed to the Harley group, who were in touch with Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury was a fresh factor in the combination. A strong rally of the sensible Tories, with new, vigorous support from the Queen, might give Marlborough all that he wanted as the basis for his campaigns.

Up to a point Harley could persuade himself that he was acting in Marlborough's practical interest. Was Marlborough the man to allow this interest to be prejudiced for the sake of saving an old friend like Godolphin, who had definitely exhausted his political usefulness? Like other people then and in later generations who have studied this enigmatic being, Harley could not measure Marlborough. He therefore deemed it probable that the Captain-General would desert Godolphin—for whom every kind of ceremonious and lucrative compensation would no doubt be provided—and accommodate himself to the new arrangement.

But still it might not be so. Marlborough might stand by Godolphin through thick and thin. The Secretary of State did not shrink from this awe-inspiring contingency. It would no doubt be bad for the war and the allied cause to oust Marlborough from the command of the armies; but when Harley was dealing with exciting personal and party forces, external events seemed to take on a new and temporarily reduced proportion. There was the Elector of Hanover, now at last persuaded to accept the command of the Imperial forces on the Rhine. Even the Whigs would be reassured in their party future by the appointment to the supreme command of the lawful Protestant successor to the crown of England. Apart from questions of victory, the lives of soldiers, the honour of the nation, the glint of the flag, all this looked promising and perhaps practicable, if need be.

But here arose the case of St John. Without St John's brilliant oratory, his splendid mental equipment, his fire, his ruthlessness, everything would go awry. What would St John do? He was Marlborough's Secretary-at-War, in the closest touch with the armies, sharing the burden of their

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labours, fascinated by their prowess. Still revelling in wine and women, he was none the less in office eager, vigilant, and tireless. He was a whole-hearted admirer of Marlborough. He was one of his young men. A comradeship subsisted between them, for Marlborough had come to like and trust St John. They corresponded freely and intimately. The Duke interested himself in St John's private affairs. He had been made acquainted with the young Minister's perpetual financial embarrassments. He had concerned himself in having his emoluments raised. More than that, this miser and skinflint, as he is represented, had on one occasion, it is asserted,<sup>1</sup> paid St John's debts from his own carefully accumulated fortune. Again the question presented itself to Harley: Would St John go the whole length?

Harley on this occasion did not deal in half-confidences. He let his associate see quite clearly that the ruin of Marlborough might, if the worst came to the worst, have to be faced as part of the plan. On what process St John made up his mind we cannot tell. To cast aside a benefactor and hero, and perchance wreck the policy of the state and the Alliance, and lose the war for the sake of a leap at real political power, must have been to him a tremendous personal issue. In the upshot, however, St John decided, should the need arise, to go with Harley in compassing the overthrow of Marlborough. For the sake of office, for a share in the management of the war, for contact with the Duke, he had very readily four years before let the Occasional Conformity Bill, and all that it meant to those he had incited, go to the devil. Now the same operation must be performed upon a larger scale. It was Marlborough now who must be sacrificed, and possibly the allied cause as well. These were important decisions for the bankrupt gambler and genius to take. They were not, however, decisions to which his audacity was unequal, or his nature a bar.

The next stage carries us into the ecclesiastical sphere. A series of important vacancies occurred. The sees of Chester

<sup>1</sup> Von Noorden, *Historische Vorträge* (1884), p. 70.

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and Exeter fell vacant, and also the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford. All these were key-posts in religion and party politics. Any dilution of King William's bishops would affect the small but solid Whig majority in the House of Lords. Oxford was at that time virtually a High Church seminary, from which the country clergy were mainly recruited. Every force at the disposal of the Whigs was set in motion. Sarah had already exhausted her influence, and her long letter of the preceding year and the Queen's reply explain the opposing points of view very clearly.<sup>1</sup> In January 1706/7 Somers had persuaded the Archbishop of Canterbury, Tenison, to wait upon the Queen and ascertain her feelings about one of the bishoprics. The Archbishop's reception was chilling. "My discourse," he reported, "was short, it being said to me on my entrance that the thing was already determined, though the person was not declared."<sup>2</sup> Godolphin's pleadings were equally vain and unwelcome. Upon the Oxford appointment Marlborough had been induced to exert his whole influence in favour of Dr Potter, the Whig nominee. Although under this heavy intervention the Queen gave way, the concession only strengthened her will upon the bishoprics. She was, in fact, resolved to regain in the episcopal what she had lost in the Ministerial sphere. If Godolphin in the hands of the Junto made her swallow Whig Ministers, she would make the Junto swallow Tory bishops. Who could defeat her here? Was she not the acknowledged Head of the Church? Was not this a matter of conscience? It was no mere party prejudice. Her duty to God was involved. Founded upon the Eternal Rock and her own desires, no one could presume to shake her. She nominated Dr Blackhall, a prominent Tory partisan, to Exeter, and Dawes, another Tory, to Chester. Both did homage in August.

Not only were party politics involved in a sharp, practical form, but behind lay a more disquieting question. If these

<sup>1</sup> See Cox, iii, 272.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Sykes, "Queen Anne and the Episcopate," *English Historical Review*, July 1935, p. 441.

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appointments represented the Queen's spontaneous personal convictions, it was bad enough. If some one was secretly influencing her, it was far worse. If that some one was a Secretary of State acting behind the backs of his colleagues, and behind the party agreements on which the Supplies had been voted and all Parliamentary difficulties removed—that surely was worst of all. The very doctrine fundamental to the British Constitution, that the Monarch can do no wrong, directed this blast of Whig suspicion and reprobation upon Harley and his agents. What agents? And here the keenest minds in England anticipated the French maxim, “Cherchez la femme.”

It may be remembered that as far back as 1689 Sarah had discovered with some surprise that she had a poor relation named Hill, a Levantine merchant ruined by speculation, who had four children, among them a daughter, Abigail.<sup>1</sup> When the parents died Sarah became the benefactress of the orphans, and provided for all of them in various ways. Abigail, the eldest, lived at St Albans with the Churchills and their children, and Sarah treated her as a sister. Thus the years passed. When Anne came to the throne Sarah introduced Abigail into the royal household, and during the course of 1702 she became one of the Queen's dressers. She figured in the list of bedchamber women of 1704.<sup>2</sup> In this post of humble intimacy Abigail faithfully and tenderly waited upon the Queen in her daily life and frequent illnesses. To beguile the long hours, she played with skill the harpsichord, greatly to the Queen's enjoyment. But at first and for some time their relations were those of mistress and servant, or of patient and nurse. There is a curious letter of Anne's in 1703 in which she chides Sarah, with a touch of jealousy, for her friendship for “Mrs [Mistress] Hill,” as Abigail was called.

Dear Mrs Freeman hates writing so much I fear, though she would stay away two or three days, she would hardly let me hear from her, and therefore for my own sake I must write to

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 496-498.

<sup>2</sup> E. Chamberlayne, *Anglia Notitia* (1704).



LADY MASHAM  
*National Portrait Gallery*



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get a line or two. I fancy now you are in town you will be tempted to see the opera, which I should not wonder at, for I should be so too, if I were able to stir, but when that will be God knows, for my feavor is not quite gone, and I am still so lame I cannot go without limping. I hope Mrs Freeman has no thoughts of going to the Opera with Mrs Hill, and will have a care of engaging herself too much in her company, for, if you give way to that, it is a thing that will insensibly grow upon you. Therefore give me leave once more to beg for your own sake, as well as poor Mrs Morley's, that you would have as little to do with that enchantress as 'tis possible, and pray pardon me for saying this.<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, however, an attachment grew in the Queen's heart towards one who rendered her so many small offices.

We have noticed the change in Sarah's relations with Anne which followed the Queen's accession. They were no longer united by common dislike of King William, and they had widely different feelings about politics and religion. We have traced the growing tension and estrangement which Sarah's advocacy of Whig interests produced between her and her royal mistress. At the same time Sarah's habits also changed. She had now become a great lady—after the Queen the greatest in the land. She dwelt at the centre of politics, and with her strong, clear-cut views, powerful, practical mind, and caustic tongue was bound to play a prominent part in all the business transacted by Ministers with the sovereign. In her husband's absence at the wars she was his link with the Queen. Her relations with Godolphin were those of an indispensable Cabinet colleague. Courted by all, besought on every side for favours, united to the Queen by what the world believed to be a tie of lifelong and undying affection, Sarah seemed endowed with power to make or mar. To do her justice, she set singularly little store by the dispensation of patronage and favours. Her interests were in the great spheres of war and affairs; her pride was to manage the Queen for the glory of the realm.

But Sarah had also her own four daughters to guide.

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS. ; quoted in Stuart Reid, *John and Sarah*, p. 146.



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She had her pleasant home at St Albans ; she had her loving life with John in his fleeting visits, and her daily correspondence with him when he was at the wars. Can we wonder that now she found her constant attendance upon Anne, their endless privacies, the dull, exacting routine of the palace, a companionship almost stifling ? Insensibly she began to bring Abigail forward to bear some of the burden of entertaining the Queen. Abigail showed herself apt in this, and Anne made less difficulty about being separated from her beloved Mrs Freeman as the early years of the reign slipped by. There was no doubt, up to 1705 at least, that Anne would much rather have had Sarah with her than anyone else in the world except her husband. Nor can we doubt that had the Duchess of Marlborough continued the same assiduous and unceasing attentions which had been for nearly twenty years Sarah Churchill's task in life she would have kept her strange dominance over the royal heart. However, as the splendid reign unfolded and Marlborough's triumphs raised him to the pinnacle of Europe, Sarah saw less and less of Anne, and Anne increasingly leaned on Abigail.

It was also unfortunate that when the two women were together conversation should turn so often on the tiresome politics about which they disagreed, or upon proper and necessary requests by Sarah for decisions and promotions. Unsuspected at first on both sides, affection cooled. By the summer of 1705 Anne had become at least as dependent upon Abigail as upon Sarah. Till about this time Abigail never seems to have "talked of business" to the Queen ; but she gradually became conscious of the reality of her influence. She was the witness on many occasions of hot disputes about politics between Sarah and the Queen. She saw Anne's distresses ; she comforted her after stormy scenes. Presently she began not unnaturally to make comments upon public affairs which pleased the Queen. She always said what her mistress liked to hear. This process became pronounced as the divergence between Harley and Godolphin developed, and here we must note, though Sarah

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appears to have been long unconscious of it, that Abigail stood in about the same family relation to Harley as she did to Sarah. She was bound by a cousinly tie to both. She would naturally see the Secretary of State in his audiences and on many occasions. She cultivated this intimacy, as well as that with the Queen.

It is not till June 2, 1707, that the name of Abigail figures in Marlborough's correspondence. Evidently Sarah had become aware of a marked change in the demeanour of her poor relation. She felt herself in contact with a new power, hesitating, tentative, furtive, undefined, but in all senses real. She wrote in alarm to the Duke. Marlborough, into whose category of values Abigail had not yet swum, replied, "I should think you might speak to her with some caution which might do good; *for she is certainly grateful and will mind what you say.*" This optimism did not last long.

Sarah was deeply disturbed. Instead of increasing her attendances upon the Queen, using all her arts upon her, and acting as if she were entirely at her ease, she indulged in the haughtiness of offended friendship. She stayed away from Court, and taxed the Queen roundly in letters with departing from their old affection and talking politics with her chambermaid. Sarah's eyes ought surely to have been opened by Anne's letter of July 18.

### *Anne to Sarah*

*Friday, five o'clock, July 18 [1707]*

I give my dear Mrs Freeman many thanks for her letter, which I received this morning, *as I must always do for everything that comes from her*, not doubting but what you say is sincerely meant in kindness to me. But I have so often been unfortunate in what I have said to you that I think the less I say to your last letter the better; therefore I shall only, in the first place, beg your pardon once more for what I said the other day, which I find you take ill; and say something in answer to your explanation of the suspicions you seemed to have concerning *your cousin Hill*, who is very far from being an occasion of feeding Mrs Morley in her passion, as you are pleased to call it; *she never meddling with anything.*

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*I believe others that have been in her station in former times have been tattling and very impertinent, but she is not at all of that temper ; and as for the company she keeps, it is with her as with most other people. I fancy that their lot in the world makes them move with some out of civility, rather than choice ; and I really believe, for one that is so much in the way of company, she has less acquaintance than anyone upon earth. I hope, since in some part of your letter you seem to give credit to a thing because I said it was so, you will be as just in what I have said, now about Hill ; for I would not have anyone hardly thought of by my dear Mrs Freeman for your poor unfortunate but ever faithful Morley's notions or actions.*<sup>1</sup>

This evidently was not one of Anne's genuine, forceful, effusions. It is, indeed, a masterpiece of sarcasm and polished hostility. It may well be that two or three people sat together upon this and chuckled in exclusive comradeship over its many stabs and gibes. We have little doubt that Harley pointed the pen with which the Queen wrote. Such a letter nowadays would chill relations between equals. Between Sovereign and subject it wore a graver aspect. The relations could not be ended. The sword of Marlborough upheld Britain and the Grand Alliance. His authority and connexions at home were on a vast scale, not easily to be measured. Sarah was his wife. Her office of Mistress of the Robes was as important as that of the Lord Keeper. She and the Queen were bound together and had to bicker it out. All political forces converged upon the point. Besides, in the Queen's heart there still perhaps sometimes lurked a fading wish to kiss, and let old days come back.

At the end of July 1707 Sarah learned that Abigail had been married some months previously to a Mr Masham, one of the Prince's gentlemen. Abigail, taxed with the concealment of this important fact from the author of her fortunes, admitted it with her mutinous deference. It was not until Sarah learned that the Queen had been present at the ceremony and had made a substantial dotation that she realized how closely organized was this inner world from which she was excluded.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 259-260.

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We have to measure not only the wrath of an arrogant woman, but a political situation which held all Europe in its grip.

Here again Sarah lost her poise. Says Coxe very truly :

In this case the Duchess, instead of attempting to conciliate her royal mistress and regain her favour by renewing her former attentions, assailed her with bitter reproaches, which were the more revolting because partly just. On the first intelligence of the marriage she burst into the royal presence and expostulated with the Queen for concealing the secret which nearly regarded her as a relation. The mortifying replies of the Queen, who warmly vindicated the silence of her favourite by imputing it to fear of offending, rather inflamed than soothed her resentment ; and from this period their correspondence exhibits a tone of dissembling humility on one hand, and, on the other, of acrimonious reproach.<sup>1</sup>

By this time the real facts had dawned on Marlborough. In the midst of this year of misfortune in the field he felt himself struck a deadly blow. He always measured the Queen's temper far better than his wife. He knew the Stuart qualities, that the breach was irreparable and the danger capital, not only to himself but to the whole cause of the Allies. From this moment a sombre fatalism began to steal over him. Henceforth he considered himself less the responsible master of events, but rather a servant who must do his duty as well as he can, and as long as he is bidden or allowed to do it. Some commentators suggest he should have submitted to the Queen, made terms with the moderate Tories, and thrown all his weight against the Whigs. This involved a wrong and disastrous strategy for the war, and the sacrifice of Godolphin. The opposite course of joining with the Whigs and coercing the Queen to expel Abigail was clearly repugnant to him. He would never take any measure against the Queen except that of leaving her service. Nothing would induce him to be the political tool of either party. He would do his job as General until he was turned out of it. Beyond that at his age he would not go. All this must be remembered

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 260.

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when we come to judge his conduct during the Peace negotiations. Abigail was probably the smallest person who ever consciously attempted to decide, and in fact decided, the history of Europe. The first extant account of her is contained in a letter of a lady of fashion dated May 12, 1707 :

This makes me think of a match you<sup>is</sup> mentioned, our relation the Dresser with Colonel Masham, whom the Queen hath lately advanced. If the same is young have heard her greatly commended for a sober woman. I believe she is the same Aunt Brom[field] used to talk of, lived with Sir George Rivers' lady when first we went to Greville Street. The great Lady Duchess in that deserves great commendations, that hath taken such care of her relations, who when low are generally overlooked. Is her brother Colonel Hill married, as was reported, to one of the Queen's maids ? <sup>1</sup>

Abigail can speak for herself in her own way.

### *Abigail Masham to Harley*

LONDON  
September 29th, 1707

All that has happened new since you left us relates to myself which is : the 22nd day I waited ; and in the evening about eight o'clock a great lady came and made a visit till almost ten. I was in the drawing room by good luck, and as she passed by me I had a very low curtsy, which I returned in the same manner, but not one word passed between us, and as for her looks, indeed, they are not to be described by any mortal but her own self. Nothing but my innocence could have supported me under such behaviour as this. When she had ended her conversation with the Queen, I was gone to my lodging to avoid seeing her again that night, but she was so full, she could not help sending a page of the back stairs to speak with me. When I came to her she told me she had nothing to say to me and was easiest to me,

<sup>1</sup> Lady Pye to Abigail Harley, at Eywood, Derby, May 12, 1707 ; Portland Papers, *H.M.C.*, p. 406. These names are superficially misleading. Abigail Masham, the dresser, conducted her famous political intrigue with Robert Harley, the Secretary of State. Abigail Harley is a different person altogether and has nothing to do with either of them. The name of Lady Pye, the writer of the letter, is sometimes used by Abigail Masham in her letters to Robert Harley as a blind for the Duchess of Marlborough.

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and then she would trouble me no more. I desired I might wait upon her where and when she pleased ; then, says she, I will send for you to-morrow. I waited all day, expecting to be sent for, but no message came ; at last, between eleven and twelve o'clock the next morning, this letter was sent by her footman, which I have taken the liberty to enclose with a copy of my answer<sup>1</sup> before she went her journey to Woodstock, if you care to give yourself the trouble of reading them ; and I beg you will let me have her letter back again when we meet.<sup>2</sup>

Dartmouth describes Abigail as “ exceedingly mean and vulgar in her manners, of a very unequal temper, childishly exceptionous and passionate.”<sup>3</sup>

Swift, on the other hand, wrote :

A person of plain, sound understanding, of great truth and sincerity, without the least mixture of falsehood or disguise ; of an honest boldness and courage, superior to her sex, firm and disinterested in her friendship, and full of love, duty, and veneration for the Queen, her mistress.<sup>4</sup>

These are opposite opinions, equally biased. The reader will be able to judge from the sequel.

The climax in Sarah's relations with Abigail at the end of 1707 can best be described in Sarah's own words.

After some time it was thought proper that she should write to me, and desire I would see her ; to which I consented, and appointed her a time. When she came I began to tell her that it was very plain the Queen was much changed towards me, and that I could not attribute this to anything but her secret management ; that I knew she had been very frequently with her Majesty in private, and that the very attempt to conceal this, by artifice, from such a friend as I had been to her was alone a very ill sign, and enough to prove a very bad purpose at bottom. To this she very gravely answered that *she was sure the Queen, who had loved me extremely, would always be very kind to me*. It was some minutes before I could recover from the surprise with which so extraordinary an answer struck me. To see a woman, whom I had raised out of the dust, put on such a superior air,

<sup>1</sup> Not found.

<sup>3</sup> Burnet, vi, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Portland Papers, H.M.C., p. 454.

<sup>4</sup> *Works*, vi, 33.

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and to hear her assure me, by way of consolation, that the Queen would be always very kind to me! At length I went on to reproach her with her ingratitude and her secret management with the Queen to undermine those who had so long and with so much honour served her Majesty.<sup>1</sup>

No one reflecting on the relationship which had subsisted for so long between Sarah and Abigail can wonder at Sarah's inability to address herself adroitly to the new situation. It was more than could be expected from human nature, least of all from Sarah's nature. Jealousy gnawed her vitals, affront inflamed her proper pride, ingratitude aroused her moral indignation. Hatred and contempt of Abigail inspired her every thought, word, and gesture. Every expression she gave to these uncontrollable feelings drove deeper the wedge between her and the Queen.

Marlborough's letters to Sarah and Godolphin, written from the camp during the summer and autumn, give a revealing picture, alike of his own mood and of the impending Court and party crisis. He wrote under strain and disappointment to his wife and to his closest friend, unconcerned with the eyes of the future.<sup>2</sup>

### *John to Sarah*

MELDERT

June 6, 1707

. . . It is true what you say of Woodstock, that it is very much at my heart, especially when we are in prosperity, for then my whole thoughts are of retiring with you to that place. But if everything does not go to our own desire, we must not set our hearts too much upon that place, for I see very plainly that whilst I live, if there be troubles, I must have my share of them. This day makes your humble servant fifty-seven. On all accounts I could wish myself younger; but for none so much as that I might have it more in my power to make myself more agreeable to you, whom I love with all my soul.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Conduct*, pp. 245-246

<sup>2</sup> The letters are severely abridged to avoid repetition and irrelevancy.

<sup>3</sup> Coxe, III, 231.

## ABIGAIL

And (June 13):

I do from my heart assure you that I should be much better pleased to live with you in a cottage than in all the palaces this [world] has without you.<sup>1</sup>

June 26, 1707

The weather is so very hot, and the dust so very great, that I have this hour to myself, the officers not caring to be abroad till the hour of orders obliges them to it. It is most certain that when I was in Spain, in the month of August, I was not more sensible of the heat than I am at this minute.<sup>2</sup> If you have the same weather, it must make all sorts of fruit very good; and as this is the third year of the trees at Woodstock, if possible, I should wish that you might, or somebody you can rely on, taste the fruit of every tree, so that what is not good might be changed. On this matter you must advise with Mr Wisc, as also what plan may be proper for the ice-house; for that should be built this summer, so that it might have time to dry. The hot weather makes me think of these things, for the most agreeable of all presents is that of ice.<sup>3</sup>

June 27, 1707

I am glad to hear that the Duke of Shrewsbury is easier than the last year. I do not think he can ever be of much use, but it is much better to have mankind pleased than angry; for a great many that can do no good have it always in their power to do hurt.<sup>4</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

MELDERT

June 27, 1707

That which gives me the greatest trouble is what you say concerning the Queen; for if M<sup>rs</sup> Morley's prejudice to some people is so unalterable, and that she will be disposing of the preferments now vacant to such as will tear to pieces her friends and servants, that must create distraction. But you know my opinion was, and is yet, *that you ought to take with you Mr Secretary*

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 212-213.

<sup>2</sup> This remark may refer to his youthful service at Tangier; and it is possible, though we have no record of it, that he travelled in Spain at that time.

<sup>3</sup> Coxe, iii, 262-263.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.



## MARLBOROUGH

*Harley*,<sup>1</sup> and to let the Queen see, with all the freedom and plainness imaginable, her true interest; and when she is sensible of that, there will be no more difficulty; if there should, you will have performed your duty, and God's will be done. For my own part, I see in almost every country they act so extremely against their own interest that I fear we have deserved to be punished.<sup>2</sup>

*John to Sarah*

MELDERT

July 4, 1707

If I were ever capable of giving advice, it would be rashness to do it at this distance; but I believe nothing can cure this matter, if I guess right, but Lord Treasurer's giving himself the trouble of writing very plainly what he thinks is wrong, and send it to the Queen, without offering to quit, or expecting any answer; but, as in duty bound, to leave it to her consideration. I should hope this would do it; but if it should not, the last and only thing must be, that the Solicitor-General speak very freely to Mr Harley. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Apparently this process of communication with a delinquent colleague through a Law Officer was reserved for the most serious differences and for decisive steps. We shall see it in use later on—a kind of writ, a legal process entirely different from the usual elaborate courtesies, however formal.

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

MELDERT

July 11, 1707

Since you think it will be of no use to take Mr Harley with you to the Queen, you must find some way of speaking plainly to him; for if he continues in doing ill offices upon all occasions to Lord Somers, Lord Sunderland, and Lord Wharton, it will at last have so much effect upon the Queen, whose inclinations are already that way, it must occasion that no measures will be followed. If Mrs Morley writes to me, I shall be sure to send you a copy of my answer.

*You have so much business that I am afraid you have forgot to settle with Mr Bridges the allowance out of the poundage, which I desired for Mr St John. I beg the favour of your doing it.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough's italics.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, iii, 265-266.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 266-267.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 272.

## ABIGAIL

*John to Sarah*

MELDERT

July 11, 1707

. . . Your expression of the ice-house, that it can't be of use this three years, is a very melancholy prospect to me, who am turned on the ill-side of fifty-seven.

I am very sorry that you think you have reason to believe that Mr Harley takes all occasions of doing hurt to England. If Lord Treasurer can't find a remedy, and that before the next winter, I should think his wisest and honestest way would be to tell the Queen very plainly which way he thinks her business may be carried on ; and if that be not agreeable, that she would lose no time in knowing of Mr Harley. I am very confident the latter would not dare undertake the business, and then everything might go quietly.<sup>1</sup>

*John to Sarah*

MELDERT

July 21, 1707

My head is full of things that are displeasing, that I am at this time a very improper judge of what would be best for the work at Woodstock ; for really I begin to despair of having any quietness there or anywhere else. What you say of Mr Prior has given me uneasiness ; but when you shall know the reason why any consideration was had for him, you will rather pity than reproach me ; but as I am taking my measures so as to be out of the power of being censured and troubled, I am resolved to be ill-used for a little time longer. I see by yours of the 30th that I am to be mortified by the prosecution of my brother George. I have deserved better from the Whigs ; but since they are grown so indifferent as not to care what mortifications the Court may receive this winter, I shall not expect favour. My greatest concern is for the Queen, and for the Lord Treasurer. England will take care of itself, and not be ruined, because a few men are not pleased. They will see their error when it is too late.<sup>2</sup>

This letter is of interest because of its reference to the poet Prior. Prior had a small post at the Board of Trade, and wrote odes glorifying Marlborough's victories. For some time he had been suspected by Godolphin of intriguing

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, III, 273-274.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 279-280.

## MARLBOROUGH

with Harley and writing anonymously in the opposite strain. In April 1707 he was dismissed from his appointment. Prior was a friend of Cardonnell. Marlborough did not believe him guilty of a double part. "When I first heard of yours and my master Blathwayt's remove," wrote Cardonnell to Prior (July 14, 1707), "I took the liberty to tell His Grace in the most friendly manner I could what I thought of your circumstances, and he was pleased to answer me, under the injunction of the greatest secrecy, that he had and would take care of you."<sup>1</sup> Marlborough's behaviour in this incident is interesting. He did not attempt to reverse Godolphin's decision. He did not argue the point with Sarah. On being convinced by Cardonnell that the dismissed poet was destitute he gave him a pension from funds under his control of four hundred pounds a year, which lasted until 1710. It then appeared that Sarah and Godolphin had been right in their suspicions. The hostile Tories on coming into power immediately restored Prior to his place at the Board of Trade, and he subsequently distinguished himself by the malevolence of his attacks upon Marlborough in *The Examiner*. We shall meet him again at a later stage in this account. But here we see a Marlborough deceived and generous.

Admiral Churchill's affairs, which reached their climax in the following year, already began to cause anxiety. "When my brother," Marlborough wrote to Godolphin (July 18), "spoke to you about his renewing, I could wish you had encouraged him in his resolution of being quit, for it would be very disagreeable to me to have him receive a mortification. . . ." <sup>2</sup>

And to Sarah (July 22):

I have sent to Lord Treasurer a copy of my letter to the Queen, tho' I own to you I am desponding as to the good it may do; however, I have done my duty, and God's will be done. By my letter you will see that I have endeavoured to do the Whigs the best office I can; but I shall think it a very ill return if they fall upon my brother George. I do with all my heart wish he

<sup>1</sup> Bath Papers, H.M.C., iii, 436.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, iii, 280.



MATTHEW PRIOR  
Thomas Hudson, after Jonathan Richardson  
*National Portrait Gallery*



## ABIGAIL

would be so wise as to quit his place ; but I hope nobody that I have a concern for will appear against him. After the usage I had from Lord Halifax I am concerned but for very few ; therefore, if there should be occasion, pray say, as from yourself, two words to Lord Sunderland ; for it would be very uneasy to me to have reason to take anything ill of him, and it is impossible for me to be unconcerned in this matter. I expect no more than what I would do if he had a brother attacked. This, and many other things, shows there is no happiness but in retirement.<sup>1</sup>

Evidently Sarah was still championing the Whigs to her husband, urging him to make their interests his own, and to help her press the Queen on their behalf. Under this persistent solicitation Marlborough now showed an utter weariness and despondency. Neither the threats against his brother nor Sarah's pleadings and remonstrance would stir him. He would do no more.

SOIGNIES

August 22, 1707

I do assure you I did not mean the Whigs when I spoke of ingratitude, but I meant it in general to England ; and if you will do me justice, you must believe that I have done all the good offices that are possible at this distance. I do not say this to make my court to the Whigs, but that I am persuaded it was good for my country, and for the service of the Queen ; for I do really believe that the Tories will do all they can to mortify the Queen and England ; for I am now both at an age and humour that I would not be bound to make my court to either party, for all that this world could give me. Besides, I am so disheartened that when I shall have done my duty, I shall submit to Providence. . . .<sup>2</sup>

And again (August 29) :

If you have good reason for what you write of the kindness and esteem the Queen has for Mrs Masham and Mr Harley, my opinion should be that the Lord Treasurer and I should tell her Majesty what is good for herself ; and if that will not prevail, to be quiet, and let Mr Harley and Mrs Masham do what they please ; for I own I am quite tired, and if the Queen can be safe, I shall be glad, . . . for as I have served her with all my heart, and

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 280-281.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 324-325.

## MARLBOROUGH

all the sincerity imaginable, I think I deserve the indulgence of being quiet in my old age.<sup>1</sup>

At this stage Harley was aware that his attitude and activities were exciting the suspicions not only of the Whigs but of his colleagues. A single specimen of his letters will suffice.

### *Harley to Marlborough*

*September 16/27, 1707*

I have desired my Lord Treasurer to ask leave for me to go into the country, which I hope to do this night se'nnight. I entreat your Grace will permit me now, upon my taking leave, to assure you I never have writ anything to you but what I really thought and intended. For near two years I have seen the storm coming upon me, and now I find I am to be sacrificed to sly insinuations and groundless jealousies. I have the satisfaction, not only of my own mind, but my enemies and friends witness for me, that I have served your Grace and my Lord Treasurer with the nicest honour and by the strictest rules of friendship; and I [that] have sacrificed everything to this, the world knows; and that what credit I have with the clergy or laity has been all employed to no other end but the service of both your Lordships.

I have not interposed in, or contradicted directly or indirectly, by myself or any other, the putting in or putting out any person, or meddled with any measures which are taken; for I have avoided knowing them. And yet I am now first charged in general, and when I desired that particulars might be told me, nothing is specified but the two nominated bishops. I must therefore say the same to your Grace I did when it was mentioned to me yesterday, that I never knew those two persons, I never spoke of them, nor ever thought of them, or directly or indirectly ever recommended them to the Queen, or to or by any other person. And, my Lord, I must do myself this justice, that I am above telling a solemn lie; that I scorn the baseness of it; and that if I had known or recommended those persons, I would not have been so mean as to deny it, but would have owned it, and given my reasons for it. And now, my Lord, since I am going into the country, and perhaps Sunday next may put an end to any farther opportunity of my troubling your Grace with letters, I beg leave to assure your Grace that I shall always preserve an

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 328-329.

## ABIGAIL

entire duty and service for your Grace. And I will add but this, that if there be any uneasiness in the Queen to comply with any proposals, I heartily wish that the true reason of it may be found out; for as I have no hand in it, nor any friend or acquaintance of mine that I know of, so I believe that half the pains which are taken to accuse and asperse the innocent would discover the true cause, and provide the remedy.<sup>1</sup>

"I dread the thoughts," Harley wrote to Godolphin (September 10/17), "of running from the extreme of one faction to another, which is the natural consequence of party tyranny, and renders the Gov[ernment] like a door which turns both ways to let in each party as it grows triumphant, and in truth this is the real parent and nurse of our factions here."<sup>2</sup> It was hardly possible to express more tersely implacable opposition to the whole system of party government as it was to flourish in England for the next two hundred years. But Harley's attempt to overturn the Government cannot be translated entirely into terms of subsequent or modern politics. In 1708 the party system, though inconceivably violent and bitter, was in the infancy of its power. The use of an organized party to impose a phalanx of Ministers upon a reluctant sovereign had not become respectable. The Whigs could not fight the coming election upon the principle that a victorious faction is entitled to dictate to the Crown its choice of advisers. Such a suggestion would have at once discredited them in the eyes of many worthy persons. If it came to a clash between the Whig Parliamentary doctrines and the Queen it was certain that large numbers of Whigs would stand by her. Public coercion of the Crown on personal issues was impossible.

Harley, armed with the Queen's favour, planned to regain his control of a great part of the Tories and at the same time to woo the moderate Whigs and isolate their extremists. The language which he held was that he represented the Queen, was fully in sympathy with her, and that she was even willing to take certain moderate Whigs into her Cabinet. Were the Junto, then, prepared to defy her wishes, to stand together against her, and to go to the polls as the

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iii, 395-397.

<sup>2</sup> Bath Papers, H.M.C., p. 181.



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declared enemies of the Prerogative? His early moves, as reported to Shrewsbury by Vernon, the former Secretary of State, indicate that Harley was beginning to take up this national position by grouping friends of the Prerogative against the Junto.<sup>1</sup> Thus at the same time he undermined Godolphin and sought to drive the Whigs to argumentative extremities which would divide and ruin them. Moreover, once Harley became the probable head of a Government he could rely upon a flow of recruits from Whig ranks. Whig discipline, though remarkable for the age of Anne, could not compare with twentieth-century caucus control. "I never in my life," Swift wrote to the Archbishop of Dublin,

saw or heard such division or complication of parties as there have been for some time. You sometimes see the extremes of Whigs and Tories driving on the same thing. I have heard the chief Whigs blamed by their own party for want of moderation. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The swift and decisive failure which overtook Harley's schemes, and the rejection by following generations of his views, must not blind us to their deadly sagacity and force at this time. Nor can we say that upon the merits Harley was wrong. The issue, apart from personal rivalries, was to him one of national *versus* party government at the height of a great war. His methods are not to be reconciled with any standard of honour or good faith. But at this juncture he came within an ace of frustrating the development of the party system, and ruling by a composite majority on the principles which St John in his old age afterwards embodied in the idea of a Patriot King.

Neither must we underestimate the quality and resources of Godolphin. His Pole Star was Marlborough and Marlborough's war. He saw his supreme duty in forming a Parliamentary foundation upon which Marlborough could stride Europe, and in furnishing him with supplies of

<sup>1</sup> James Vernon, *Letters illustrative of the Reign of William III* . . . (1696-1708) (edited by G. P. R. James, 1841), iii, 345.

<sup>2</sup> February 12, 1708; *The Works of Jonathan Swift* (edited by Sir Walter Scott, 1883), xv, 283.

## ABIGAIL

money, men, and ships. To this purpose he used all the ruse and artifice with which forty years of Parliamentary and Court intrigue, in times most of them rougher than the age of Anne, had made him familiar. While Harley calculated upon the collapse of the party system, Godolphin relied upon its feuds. The Lord Treasurer's strength consisted, according to Briançon, in his supreme gift for applying the maxim 'Divide and govern.' His skill lay in the management of business in such a way that, immediately any party assault on the Ministry threatened to become dangerous, some question would be raised to set the Tories and Whigs by the ears. Therefore he worked for national government through the equipoise and cancellation of the parties, whereas Harley sought it by the fusion of their central elements.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FALL OF HARLEY

1706-1707,  
Winter

AS the meeting of Parliament approached it became known that a serious attack impended upon the administration of the Navy. Naval circles debated in those days, as in our own, whether our sea effort should be directed to keeping open the lines of communication or expended on main military purposes in support of the armies. During the first six years of the war Marlborough's strategy, always aiming at decisive results, had been ready to suffer heavy losses on the trade routes for the sake of gaining command of the Mediterranean and all that followed therefrom. Part of the price paid for the immense naval effort against Toulon had been the marked weakening of trade protection, with consequent heavy forfeits on the oceans and elsewhere. Never in our history has the Fleet been used so much for the military purpose, or so little for the comfort, convenience, and profit of trade. The losses of the merchants had been severe. No fewer than eleven hundred merchant ships belonging to London River alone had been lost during the war. In this very year of 1707 French cruisers had raided three great trading fleets, and taken a heavy toll off Brighton, off the coast of Lapland, and between Scilly and Ushant, capturing or destroying six battle-ships of the escorting squadrons. The Whigs, apart from their political manœuvres, were naturally sensitive to the bitter complaints of the merchants and the City financiers. We may measure the classic vigour of the war administration by the fact that it was capable in the pursuit of victory of imposing such hardships upon these powerful and vital interests. But now victory was lacking; there was naval miscarriage and defeat. The brunt of all this fell upon George Churchill, virtually, in modern terms, First Sea Lord, who under the Queen's husband, Prince George of Denmark,

## THE FALL OF HARLEY

managed the Admiralty in harmony with his brother's strategic aims.

To these serious, debatable public issues private friction was added. Halifax, better known to history as William III's famous Finance Minister, Montagu, one of the lords of the Junto, a brilliant, powerful man, for years excluded from office, was at this time in a fury with Marlborough. Having been associated with him in the Barrier-Succession negotiations of the previous year, he ardently desired to be nominated a plenipotentiary in the peace discussions which always lay just beneath the threshold of the war, and might at any moment become all-important. He had paid his court to Marlborough. He had even stood, hat in hand, to Sarah as she entered her carriage. His wish had not been gratified. His anger is recorded in vehement letters now extant. He made little secret that he would retaliate for this rebuff, and his means were ready to hand. He would when Parliament met attack George Churchill and the administration of the Admiralty.

Admiral Churchill, Marlborough's faithful naval wing, was personally vulnerable. He was a vehement Tory, probably in his heart a Jacobite. Rumour said graft was rife in the Admiralty; and, indeed, there was evidence of convoys denied to the merchants or delayed on insufficient grounds, and of officers who must be bribed to do their duty. Marlborough's brother was, then, to be accused by Halifax and the Whigs at once of maladministration which had proved disastrous and of feathering his own nest. Upon the first count he has a good answer to later times. He steadfastly pursued the major objects of the war. Upon the second count no very satisfactory rebuttal is forthcoming. In the event nothing was brought home against him. But whether this was due to his innate purity, or to the fact that the Whigs for larger reasons, which will appear, eventually abandoned the hunt, is a dubious matter.

Marlborough was distressed and worried by the attack upon his brother, of which he had learned early. As his letters from the camp show, he was well aware of Halifax's intentions

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and their cause. He tried to placate that offended magnate by a ceremonious and conciliatory letter. Halifax had no mind to be paid off in such light coin. He left the Duke's letter unanswered—a marked affront—and continued his hostile preparations. There was, however, one helpful reaction. Any attack on the Admiralty was an attack upon the Queen's beloved husband, the Lord High Admiral. Prince George had been friendly to Marlborough even before the days when they both rode off at Salisbury from James II to William III. He was under the Duke's spell. All his influence with the Queen was steadily exerted for Marlborough. He was in these years, for all his simplicity, ailing health, heavy meals, and heavier potations, one of the linchpins in that marvellous coach of State that drove so triumphantly along the roads of Europe. Anne would tolerate no reflection upon her husband. To attack Admiral Churchill was to attack George of Denmark. The Queen would have liked to see him commanding the armies of the Grand Alliance, and winning the great battles of the age. This through Dutch obstinacy and other difficulties had failed. Mr Freeman had had to do it all in his own name. But the Admiralty and the sea war and all that the Royal Navy meant to Britain were in the Queen's eyes embodied in her husband. That sphere should certainly be his. Moreover, Prince George readily made common cause with Admiral Churchill. He let himself be managed by him, felt that thereby he was helping the Duke, was loyal to the now broken Cockpit circle, and pursuing the surest road to victory in the war. It is by no means certain that this limited man had not laid hold upon the root of the matter. Thus the Queen's husband stood by George Churchill, and the Queen resented the attack upon the Admiralty as a personal insult to herself. She expected such treatment from the Whigs. She was perturbed but not unduly dismayed to find not only high but moderate Tories joining in it.

A catastrophe at sea had closed the year of disaster. Sir Cloudesley Shovell, returning late in the year from Toulon with the battle fleet, approached the mouth of the Channel



ADMIRAL GEORGE CHURCHILL

From a crayon drawing by Sir Godfrey Kneller

*By permission of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich*



## THE FALL OF HARLEY

in the third week of October 1707. We are prone in these days of steam, perfect charts of rocks, shoals, and currents, well-lighted coasts, and wireless telegraphy to ignore the awful dangers of the sea in the early eighteenth century. We may remember *Rooke's repugnance to a late return of the heavy ships*.<sup>1</sup> But in this period the fleet was used as roughly as the armies, and all risks were run for main objects. These mighty oak vessels, carrying sometimes ninety guns and more than seven hundred men, were in the narrow waters at the mercy of gale, mist, and current. So unsure were the methods of fixing a position within twenty or thirty miles that the Admiralty was wont to send out frigates to cruise about to pick up the homeward-bound battleships and cross-check their position by their recent contacts with the land. This precaution was not neglected in October 1707. Unhappily, the helping frigate was too late to find the fleet. The weather was thick and violent ; and there was a current, not then known to navigators, which carried Admiral Shovell forty miles out of his reckoning. The evening of October 22 found the battle fleet with a deadly wind amid the sharp rocks of the Scillies. Two great ships and a capital frigate were dashed to pieces, fifteen hundred sailors perished, and, worst of all, our finest admiral, cast upon the beach exhausted and unconscious, was let die for the sake of his emerald ring by an island woman, who a generation later at the point of death confessed her crime.

Such were the elements of the storm, about to break upon the Admiralty, which the foundations of Marlborough's political structure must now withstand.

The first Parliament of Great Britain met on November 6/17, 1707. The forty-five new members from Scotland were solidly favourable to the Government, and the re-election of Mr Speaker Smith was uncontested. The Commons replied dutifully and without demur to the gracious Speech. When the management of the Navy was arraigned they listened contentedly to the cogent defence presented by a young

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 118.



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Minister—Robert Walpole by name—who had lately been appointed to the Admiralty Board. Not so the Lords : on the contrary, while the Commons were voting even larger Supplies than in the previous year and increasing the army from fifty to sixty thousand men, the Upper House opened a series of debates on the most thorny questions of the day. They declined to acknowledge the Queen's Speech until the state of the nation had been reviewed. They actually delayed their reply for six weeks. Never had such action been taken by the Peers. It seemed, as the Queen said, to deny her "even ordinary politeness." The Whig lords led the way in the attack on the Admiralty, and no sooner was this launched than the Tories came in behind it. The Government was called to account by both the great parties. Marlborough, reaching England on November 16/27, found Godolphin in dire straits.

When we review the situation which the two friends had to face after the year of disaster one must admit that it required strong nerves. The Queen, estranged from Godolphin, severed from Sarah, bridleing at the Whigs, loyal only to the Admiralty ; the high Tories in Church and Parliament intent to smash the Government and the war ; the Whigs resolved to use the public difficulties to assist their constitutional claims and oust and humble their party foes ; the maturing of Harley's profound schemes, St John at his side, Abigail in his hands ! But Marlborough's weight and fame were immense. In spite of his own barren campaign and the many misfortunes that had befallen the Allies, he seemed to bulk even larger in men's minds than after Blenheim and after Ramillies. The very fact that things were going wrong restored him an authority denied on the morrow of his victories. When he landed at Dover all eyes were turned upon him. We have glimpses of him at this time from contemporary pens. His levees were thronged as if they were those of a sovereign. He seems to have fallen into the habit, used by the greatest personages of those days, of receiving in his bedroom as he did in his tent. Like the kings of France, though he did not carry it to the same

## THE FALL OF HARLEY

extremes, he made his toilet in public. "Every morning when he is in London he has in his antechamber gentlemen of the first quality including ambassadors and Ministers of foreign princes; he dresses, even shaves and puts on his shirt, in public; yet he behaves in a manner calculated to offend no one, at least by words, and affects a gentle and gracious air with all." <sup>1</sup>

Marlborough's conception of the campaign of 1708 was, in fact, a renewal of the double invasion of France which had failed in 1707. If he could have ordered it, Prince Eugene, with the Duke of Savoy, would have broken into Dauphiné at the head of the forces, brought up again to full strength, which had attempted Toulon in the previous year. He was extremely set upon this, and the reports which Brigadier Palmes brought back showed Victor Amadeus well disposed to the scheme. Marlborough was resolved to stand on the defensive in Spain and make the main effort in the Low Countries. Eugene, for his part, was more inclined to come round to the northern theatre and fight upon the Rhine or the Moselle in conjunction with Marlborough. However, English politics and Parliamentary strategic fancies complicated the problem. Many Whigs, as well as the Tory Party, were unduly fond of the Spanish scene. They had worked themselves up year by year to the exorbitant principle "No peace without Spain," thus vastly extending the aims of the war. They supposed that the conquest of Spain could best be achieved on the spot. They wearied of the severe fighting in Flanders, and imagined the Iberian peninsula the shorter and easier road. They wished to avenge the defeat at Almanza locally.

These views were constantly pressed by Charles III and all directly interested in the Spanish enterprise. Stanhope had returned home after the disaster as the mouthpiece of the young King. No more competent representative could have been chosen. Stanhope ranks high among the heroic and brilliant figures of the age of Anne. He was an

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Genoese envoy, *Relazioni di Ambasciatori Sabaudi, Genovesi e Veneti 1693-1713* (edited by C. Morandi, 1935), p. 179.

## MARLBOROUGH

accomplished soldier. He had gained the entire confidence of Marlborough when serving under him in the campaign of 1705. He was one of the Duke's most trusted informants upon Spanish affairs. Although his military record is chequered by one grievous defeat, his reputation even for skill survived, while his personal prowess was to be adorned by the astounding feat which the Romans exalted as *spolia opima*. During the battle of Almenara in 1710 he actually, as Commander-in-Chief, cut down with his own sword the opposing commander. When it is remembered that to these unfading laurels he subsequently added the successive discharge of the duties of Foreign Secretary and eventually Prime Minister, his title to rare distinction cannot be disputed.

Stanhope, with his already acknowledged force and ability, now urged upon Marlborough and the Cabinet a halt in Flanders and a decisive campaign in the Peninsula. This was pressed through every channel. "I hope," wrote Charles III later (January 1708) to Wratislaw, "that you will at last recognize that it is a chimerical conception that one ought to act upon the defensive here. They must either put me in the position to advance and act on the offensive, or they must clearly determine to sacrifice my person and the whole affair here."<sup>1</sup> And again, later, to Marlborough (January 18, 1708): "Stanhope's secret project consists in that you should come yourself to Spain with 25 or 20,000 men with which, you entering by one side, and Prince Eugene and I from the other, you will end with one glorious stroke this long and so bloody war."<sup>2</sup>

These appeals are typical.

Such strategy found no foothold with Marlborough. He was inflexibly resolved not to shift the axis of the war to Spain. He was willing to recruit the English forces already there sufficiently to enable them to mark time without collapse. He was willing that the Empire should send new contingents; but the bulk of the drafts and all the reinforce-

<sup>1</sup> 1708, correspondence between Charles III and Wratislaw; Klopp, xiii, 107.

<sup>2</sup> Vienna Archives, quoted in Arneth, *Prinz Eugen von Savoyen*, ii, 460.

## THE FALL OF HARLEY

ments under British control must be reserved for the main army in Flanders. One grievous concession he would make if absolutely forced: he would consent to Prince Eugene going to Spain. He had foreseen and admitted the attraction of the step and even the need for it in a letter to Godolphin in September.

HELCHIN

September 19, 1707

As to your desire of Prince Eugene's going to Spain, I think he can serve nowhere else; for I dare say [*i.e.*, I am sure] he will not serve under the Elector of Hanover, nor can he serve with the Duke of Savoy. I shall incline to think, as Sir Edward Seymour said in the House of Commons, that he never knew admiral or general that had ships or troops enough.

I am of opinion that the war will be decided in this country by a battle early in the next campaign, for they [the enemy] see that no success in any other part of the world can get them peace; so that I am persuaded they will have a very great struggle here at the opening of the field.<sup>1</sup>

He had written to Wratislaw (November 21), "One sees that the last resource of the King is in the presence of Prince Eugene at the head of the army next year."<sup>2</sup> The English Cabinet was ardent for such a decision. Nothing could be more popular in London. Marlborough therefore lent himself to suggestions of this character which were freely made during the late autumn to the Emperor and to his glorious general. Nevertheless we do not believe that Marlborough ever thought there was much likelihood of Eugene consenting to go. Obviously, if the whole burden of the Spanish theatre was to be thrown upon him, Eugene would stipulate for a strong, effective army. Indeed, he had already written that he would not serve without "a real army, not on paper, capable of acting offensively."

Marlborough was sure that with his authority in London and his influence at The Hague he could prevent any large diversion of forces. Thus there would be no army to satisfy Eugene. Meanwhile, if necessary, great play could be made in England with the Prince's name, and the Cabinet

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iii, 353-354.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, ii, 627.

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could safely go all the way with Parliament in asking for Eugene's services, which would almost certainly not be granted. This seems to be the key to Marlborough's inner policy and to the voluminous correspondence which arose between the Allies. On November 29 the Queen wrote to the Emperor asking that Eugene should be sent to Spain. On December 9, however, we know that Marlborough said in great confidence to Primoli, a secretary of Count Gallas, the Imperial Ambassador, that he "did not intend to send troops into Catalonia for the new campaign."<sup>1</sup> This is the decisive fact.

The second debate in the Lords on Peterborough's conduct drew from Marlborough his most memorable Parliamentary performance. It is the more remarkable because, although he had made up his mind what ought to be done and what he meant to do, his handling of the debate was at once spontaneous, dissimulating, and entirely successful. As on the battlefield, he changed his course very quickly indeed and spread a web of manœuvre before his opponents. He made candour serve the purpose of falsehood, and in the guise of reluctantly blurting out the whole truth threw his assailants into complete and baffling error. Under the impulse of an emotion which could not have been wholly assumed, he made a revelation of war policy which effectively misled not only the Opposition but the whole House, and which also played its part in misleading the foreign enemy, who were of course soon apprised of the public debate. He acted thus in the interests of right strategy and of the common cause as he conceived them. He was accustomed by the conditions under which he fought to be continually deceiving friends for their good and foes for their bane; but the speed and ease with which this particular manœuvre was conceived and accomplished in the unfamiliar atmosphere of Parliamentary debate opens to us some of the secret depths of his artful yet benevolent mind. But to the scene!

<sup>1</sup> Primoli's letter; Klopp, xiii, 10.

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Rochester opened the debate. The Queen was present incognito in her box "till five of the clock in the afternoon." The high Tory leader embraced the interests of Peterborough the Whig, who had thrown himself upon the good offices of his party opponents. He dilated upon Peterborough's courage and skill. He recounted his services. Was it not usual and fitting that an officer of such rank and achievement, recalled from the front, should either be thanked by Parliament or called to account for his conduct? Halifax, speaking for the Whigs, took a line which would enable his party to throw its weight for or against the Government as they might later decide. He supported the demand for a full inquiry. Several Tory peers, headed by Haversham, followed with open attacks upon Galway as an incompetent foreigner responsible for a British defeat. Then Rochester rose again. He broadened the issue. In the temper of the House he felt able to impugn the whole principle of a major offensive in Flanders: "We seem," he said, "to neglect the principal business and mind only the accessories. I remember the saying of a great general, the old Duke of Schomberg, 'that the attacking France in the Netherlands is like taking a bull by the horns.'" He proposed that we should stand on the defensive in Flanders, and send from that army "fifteen or twenty thousand men into Catalonia." Nottingham, the other Tory ex-Minister, followed in the same strain: "Spain, the principal object of the war, is almost abandoned."

Marlborough had certainly not expected this development, nor the evident swing of opinion with which it was received. He rose at once. Every eye was upon him, and his anger was apparent to all. He spoke of "undigested counsel." He declared that the need was to augment rather than lessen the armies in Flanders. He gave two reasons, blunt and solid. The first "which induces me to object to this proposal is that in Spain most of the enemy's strong places may be kept with one battalion in each, whereas the great towns of Brabant which we have conquered require twenty times that number of men for their preservation." This implied that relaxing pressure in the main theatre would liberate

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incomparably more French troops for the struggle in Spain than any allied reinforcements which could be spared. His second reason was: "If our army in the Netherlands be weakened and the French by their great superiority should gain any considerable advantage, which is not improbable, the discontented party in Holland, who are not a few, and who bear with impatience the necessary charges of the war, will not fail to cry aloud for peace." These massive truths delivered tersely did not stem the tide. Spain was uppermost in all minds, and Marlborough had not even mentioned Spain.

For the third time Rochester rose. He declared himself astonished that "the noble peer, who had ever been conspicuous for calmness and moderation, should now lose his natural temper." The House was set upon the succour for Spain. "Would not his Grace oblige their lordships by apprising them how they might attain troops to send thither for that purpose?" "The obligation," he added, "is the greater as Lord Peterborough has reported the opinion of Prince Eugene that the Germans would rather be decimated than be sent into Spain."

Thereupon Marlborough resolved to make public the idea of sending Prince Eugene. He excused himself for his warmth. Such a vital issue could scarcely be discussed without profound concern. He would take the House into his confidence:

"Although it is improper to disclose secret projects in so numerous an assembly, because the enemy will not fail to be informed of them; yet I am authorized by the Queen to gratify your lordships by the assurance that measures have been already concerted with the Emperor for forming an army of forty thousand men, under the command of the Duke of Savoy, and for sending succours to King Charles. *It is also to be hoped that Prince Eugene may be induced to take the command in Spain*, in which case the Germans will gladly follow him. The only difficulty which may be objected to this scheme is the usual tardiness of the Court of Vienna; and it must be admitted that if the seven thousand recruits, which the Emperor promised for Piedmont,

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had arrived in time, the enterprise against Toulon would probably have been attended with success. But I dare engage my word that for the future his Imperial Majesty will punctually perform his promises." <sup>1</sup>

The peers were staggered by his declaration. They felt they had been made party to the secrets of the Cabinet and of the Captain-General. They rejoiced to find how much they had misjudged the policy. The opposition collapsed. Rochester even said, "Had we known sooner how well all things had been managed, this debate might have been spared." Somers clinched the matter for the Whigs by moving "That no peace could be reasonable or safe either for her Majesty or her allies if Spain and the West Indies were suffered to continue in the power of the house of Bourbon," and a resolution was passed unanimously thanking the Queen for pressing the Emperor to send a considerable force to Spain under the command of Prince Eugene. The action of the House moved so rapidly that the Whigs had to be very agile in adding a rider-resolution in favour of also "reinforcing the Duke of Savoy and strengthening the army on the Rhine," and further setting up a committee to cast this resolution into the form of an address, upon which Marlborough, Godolphin, and Peterborough were named to serve, but no Tory except Rochester. Thus was affirmed the Whig thesis, "No peace without Spain," but at the same time there was safeguarded the main effort in the main theatre. The long-delayed acknowledgment of the Queen's Speech embodied these conclusions.

When the Ministers met to consult on the morrow of this memorable debate they set themselves to implement Marlborough's declaration, with which they themselves were in hearty accord. The idea of Eugene conquering Spain for the Allies captivated London opinion. Accordingly solemn appeals were renewed to the Emperor to send him there. Marlborough joined in these. He wrote letters to Wratislaw. He held conversations with the Imperial Ambassador which presented the view of the British Parliament. But all the

<sup>1</sup> Cox, IV, 12-13 The report is, of course, only a summary



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time he had continued obstinately and calmly to strengthen the main theatre, to prepare for the double invasion of France, and to withhold all reinforcements from Spain except a meagre draft of eighteen hundred men. He submitted as little to the strategic conceptions of the Lords and Commons in 1707 as he did during the march to Blenheim.

On December 22/January 3 the hopes of the Cabinet were dashed by a dispatch from the English ambassador at Vienna, in reply to their earlier requests, stating that the Emperor could not consent to send Eugene to Spain. The Ministers, with the assurances given to Parliament only three days before vivid in their minds, and the general applause which had greeted them ringing in their ears, were consternated. Indeed, they were furious. Hoffmann, the Imperial Ambassador, was summoned before them. His excuse was blunt: there were not enough troops in Spain to make a worthy command for Prince Eugene. "I must admit," he reported to his Government, "I have never seen the English Ministers in such a state of excitement as over this refusal."<sup>1</sup> Marlborough appeared to share the general feeling, and he lent his weight to their appeals both orally to Hoffmann and, three days later, in a strong letter to Wratislaw. Inwardly, we may suppose, he was able to bear the disappointment with his customary composure.

Eventually, in February, for it is convenient here to anticipate, the Emperor made a counter-proposal. He had recourse to one of those expedients which even now have not gone entirely out of fashion. He suggested a conference at The Hague, where the war leaders of England, Holland, and the Empire should settle among themselves the final plan of campaign. This was found acceptable by all. In the first place it seemed to put everything off for a time. The Ministers could feel that the question of sending Prince Eugene to Spain was still open, and as it gradually appeared that the conference could not assemble until April, Marlborough saw that there was very little prospect of his going.

<sup>1</sup> Hoffmann's dispatch; Klopp, xii, 15.

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In fact, the procedure adopted after all the political storms left everything in Marlborough's hands under the exact conditions which he desired. Little wonder, then, that on the very day (February 17/28) when Hoffmann received his instructions from Vienna Marlborough saw him, and personally urged him to frame his proposals for a conference in a formal memorial to be presented to the Queen.<sup>1</sup> From that moment he never said another word about sending Prince Eugene to Spain. There can be no doubt that he got what he had wanted all along. But he had certainly been guilty of dissimulation.

The first month of Parliament had been dominated by the Whig attempt to link Supply with the attack on Admiral Churchill. This did not prove so formidable as Marlborough and Godolphin had feared. The Tories gave it only partial and lukewarm support. The more the Whig agitation prospered the cooler the Tories became. Their sympathies were more easily aroused by the distress of the Queen's husband than by that of the City merchants who had lost their trading ships. In the end Parliament was made content by the passing of an Act "for the better securing the Trade by Cruisers and Convoys," which regulated the service of trade defence on the lines which had been proposed by Admiral Churchill, among others, fifteen years before. Prince George's Council had in fact followed these principles so far as the means allowed after providing for the offensive function of the main fleet abroad. After the passing of this Act in March 1708 the losses of merchant shipping diminished sensibly; but this may well have been because the state of the war, especially after the destruction of the French fleet at Toulon, no longer required so great a force in the Mediterranean, and thus more cruisers could be found for the North Sea and the mouth of the Channel. The strategy of the first part of the war appears in the final sentence of the answer the Lord High Admiral made to the Committee of the House of Lords in January 1708.

<sup>1</sup> Klopp, xiii, 19

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"His Royal Highness does hope their Lordships will believe that the Queen's fleet has not been useless and unemployed during this war, which cannot be carried on agreeable to the declared sense of their Lordships, but by supporting a superiority at sea upon the coasts of Portugal, Spain, and Italy, in all which places the Queen's fleet hath done great services the last four years, and attempted some things which might have secured Britain for one age from all the naval power of France."<sup>1</sup>

Both Houses seemed glad when in the fifth week of the session the Spanish question, with all the exciting scandals about Peterborough and the Almanza disaster, came upon the scene and diverted attention from what threatened to become a very dangerous Whig electioneering cry. It seems probable that both Godolphin and Harley, for opposite purposes, were favourable to this development. At any rate, it was from the Ministerial bench that on December 9/20 the matter was originally opened in the House of Commons. The first phase of the conflict of the session was ended on December 19/30 by Marlborough's triumphant speech. The Address had been voted in the Lords; the Supplies had been given by the Commons: the Ministry still held together; and it seemed that the crisis was past. Exhausted, as one may readily believe, by all they had gone through, Marlborough and Godolphin retired to Woodstock and Newmarket for Christmas, and both remained in the depths of the country for a full fortnight.

At the moment when Harley's underground movement was in its most delicate and critical condition a sudden startling incident plunged him in grave personal weakness and embarrassment. A certain William Greg, one of the various confidential agents whom he was wont so wisely to send about the country to report on the public temper, had been placed by him in the sub-department which dealt with the correspondence of the French prisoners of war. The letters of all these French nobles and generals from Marshal Tallard downward were forwarded to France after being censored.

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of the House of Lords*, xviii, 410.

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When the mail was being made up for the Continent the Secretary of State's letters and dispatches dealing with the most secret matters were sent to this same room, and often left lying on the table till they were put in their proper bags for The Hague, Berlin, Vienna, Lisbon, Barcelona, or Turin. Daniel Defoe, the most famous of all Harley's political scouts, shocked at this lax procedure, had already warned his chief of its dangers; but the Secretary of State had taken no action.

This was a period in the war when French espionage attained its highest efficiency and success. Already in May 1707 Chamillart had corrupted and gained the secretaries employed by the Savoyard Ministers both at The Hague and St James's. The plan against Toulon had in fact been betrayed, though somewhat tardily, from Briançon's office in London. Now, in the winter of 1707/8, the tentacles of the French secret service penetrated the office of the Secretary of State and lapped themselves around William Greg. The wretched man, poorly paid, financially hunted, sought to procure from the French Government immunity from capture for an English merchant-ship whose owners had promised him two hundred guineas. He therefore slipped a sealed envelope into the bag of the French prisoners' correspondence. This contained nothing less than a copy of the letter which Queen Anne had written with her own hand to the Emperor asking for the services of Prince Eugene in Spain. Suspicion had already been aroused by previous leakages; the bag was opened in Holland, the treachery exposed, and Greg, arrested (December 31/January 11), made a full confession of his villainy. At the same time two smugglers whom Harley had employed to procure intelligence between Calais and Boulogne turned out to be double spies. Upon arrest they of course protested that they had only been telling some tales to learn better. In truth they had trafficked with both sides for personal gain. On January 8 Briançon's secretary, who had sold the Toulon plan in the previous year, was detected, exposed, and after an exciting chase through London laid by the heels. Both the English scandals touched the

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Secretary of State at a time when the very air seemed poisonous.

It would be an error to ascribe the fall of Harley to his clerk's treason. It must however have played an important part in this evenly balanced struggle for power. At any rate, when in the middle of January Godolphin and Marlborough came back to town they felt strong enough to consider definitely his expulsion from the Government. Godolphin, with Marlborough's assent, discussed with the Whig leaders the promotion of the moderate-Whig Chancellor of the Exchequer, Boyle, to the Secretaryship of State in Harley's place. The Whigs cared little for Boyle's advancement, but much for Harley's fall. They saw that their pressure had worn out Godolphin's favour only to exalt a far more hostile and obnoxious personage, with all his train and designs. Thus in the middle of January the whole blast of these internal passions was concentrated upon Harley, already somewhat smitten in public opinion and under grievous personal imputation. Such was the power of the Queen's support and his own following that he maintained an equal and now open war within the Cabinet and in Parliament for nearly a month.

Harley, at bay, marshalled his forces. He assembled the elements of his alternative Government. He drew the Duke of Buckingham into his combination. He persuaded the Queen directly, and through Abigail, to encourage the Tories with the near prospect of a moderate Tory Administration. The public need created Parliamentary opportunities. Twenty thousand men were wanted for the army, fifteen thousand of whom must be found with the utmost speed. The most strained interpretations of voluntary recruitment had now failed. A Conscription Bill was brought before Parliament in the early days of the new year. The plan for the campaign of 1708 depended upon it.<sup>1</sup> This measure stirred parties and individual members alike to their roots. All those deep-seated sentiments of personal freedom innate in English hearts were roused. The press-gang for the Navy

<sup>1</sup> Briçonnet to the Duke of Savoy, January 23/February 3, Turin State Archives, Lettere di Ministri, Gran Bretagna, Mazzo 16.



ROBERT HARLEY, EARL OF OXFORD  
From an engraving after the portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller



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was an old custom. Stimulating the constables by bonuses to entice, cajole, or peaceably persuade the unemployed, or to coerce vagabonds, to take the Queen's shilling had run its course. Now, either the war effort must languish or young men at work in the fields, or even possessed of some property or the heirs to property, must by compulsion don the scarlet coat. In extreme perturbation the House of Commons sat in committee upon the demand.

Harley's attempt to overturn the Government developed very rapidly. It is to be distinguished both in nature and form from the previous Whig and Tory party manoeuvres. These had aimed far lower—points of prejudice for the election, a working agreement with the Ministry, perhaps Cabinet rank for one or two of the leaders. Harley's was a deliberate attempt to upset the whole Government, to detach men from both parties, and to form an entirely new Ministry of the middle. Shocking!

The first unexpected difficulties arose in the Committee of Friday, January 16, upon the conscription proposals. On the Tuesday following these were defeated by 185 votes to 177. This was the first defeat in the House of Commons which any Ministry of Queen Anne had sustained. While both Houses were wrestling with conscription and vehemently probing the causes of the Spanish disaster, St John, no doubt at Harley's instigation, committed an indiscretion calculated to bring any Ministry down with a clatter. Harley had on January 12 asked him for the figures for the troops in British pay in the Peninsula and at Almanza on the date of the battle. St John had at first replied that none were available. Now suddenly on January 29 in the course of a tense debate the Secretary-at-War blurted out to the House of Commons that out of 29,595 men voted by Parliament for service in Spain only 8660 had fought in the decisive action. This produced a tremendous sensation. Other Ministers disputed their colleague's statement, and an interchange of searching addresses to the Queen and Ministerial replies as from the Queen's hand followed. During the same week the Government majority, even upon a financial



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measure, fell to twenty-nine, and then to fifteen. On the Saturday a majority of fifty-one was recorded "against the Court." Finally a hostile resolution about the numbers at Almanza was carried "without a division." The House of Commons was completely out of control. In the Lords the Whigs were still pressing the Admiralty. Following this week of Opposition triumph, the Queen "told Mr St John that she was resolved to part with the Lord Treasurer. She sent him with a letter to the Duke of Marlborough which she read to him to that purpose ; and she gave him leave to tell it about the town, which he did without any reserve." <sup>1</sup>

Harley was now sure he had won. He spoke openly of his new Administration and of the favour of the Crown. Nothing remained but the supreme trial of strength. All that royal intrigue and Parliamentary manœuvre could do was achieved. Against it stood Marlborough, virtually alone. No one outside the circle of Harley's most daring adherents had faced what the nation, Europe, and the Queen would do if he were overthrown. It was generally believed, or at least hoped, that he would consent to the sacrifice of Godolphin, and serve the Queen at home and abroad in the new combination. All this was now to be put to the test.

On January 29, the very night of St John's disclosure, Godolphin instructed the Attorney-General to tell Harley officially that he no longer possessed the confidence of the Lord Treasurer.<sup>2</sup> Harley met this formal and final challenge with imperturbable effrontery. He professed himself at a loss to understand what complaint could lie against him. He volubly defended his loyalty and good faith as a colleague. He declared himself the victim of a conspiracy. He demanded an interview with Marlborough. He appealed to him as his patron and protector. But Marlborough had slowly been brought to regard him as an inveterate liar and a mortal foe. He showed that he did not believe a single word that Harley uttered, and he cited with particularity a number of odious but now established

<sup>1</sup> Swift to the Archbishop of Dublin, London, February 12, 1708, *Works*, xv, 282.

<sup>2</sup> Bath Papers, H.M.C., i, 189.

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details. Even after this Harley wrote Godolphin one of those dishonest letters of injured innocence which have but to be read in the light of the established facts to prove him a base and hardy hypocrite. Godolphin's answer stands upon its own simplicity :

I have received your letter, and am very sorry for what has happened, to lose the good opinion I had so much inclination to have of you ; but I cannot help seeing, nor believing my senses. I am very far from having deserved it of you. God forgive you.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough meanwhile had been at grips with the Queen. Those who depict Anne as a weak woman should reflect upon the marvellous tenacity of her will-power, right or wrong. Upon her lone head and worn, ailing frame descended the whole weight of the quarrels of her realm. The mightiest men of that brilliant age contended for her verdict. The passions of great parties, inflamed by faction and impelled by real needs, collided in her bosom. The storms which now exhaust themselves over enormous electorates beat upon her. Alone she had to face in personal confrontation the reason, knowledge, and appeal of her most famous servants and counsellors. We can see from her vigorous letters the skill with which she selected her lines of resistance. When these became untenable she fell back on woman's tears. But she would not yield. At all costs she would stand by Harley. When Marlborough declared that he would not sit again in Council with such a man she made no response. When he made plain his determination to resign she answered that "he might as well draw his dagger and stab her then and there as do such a thing."<sup>2</sup> But she would not dismiss Harley. She wept convulsively, she seemed about to suffocate ; but never would she agree. Such were the scenes inseparable from the discharge of public business in these antique conditions. Marlborough, with his tenderness and chivalry to women, his romantic, almost mystic reverence for the Queen, must indeed have felt that life was not worth living.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> L'Hermitage, Dutch Agent in London, Add. MSS. 17,677.

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### *Marlborough to the Queen*

MADAM,

Since all the faithful services I have endeavoured to do you, and the unwearied pains I have taken for these ten days to satisfy and convince your Majesty's own mind, have not been able to give you any such impressions of the false and treacherous proceedings of Mr Secretary Harley to Lord Treasurer and myself, but that your Majesty is pleased to countenance and to support him, to the ruin of your own business at home, I am very much afraid it will be attended with the sorrow and amazement of all Europe, as soon as the noise of it gets abroad. And I find myself obliged to have so much regard to my own honour and reputation as not to be every day made a sacrifice to falsehood and treachery, but most humbly to acquaint your Majesty that no consideration can make me serve any longer with that man. And I beseech your Majesty to look upon me, from this moment, as forced out of your service as long as you think fit to continue him in it.

No heart is fuller of duty to your Majesty than mine; nobody has more sincere wishes for your prosperity, nor shall more constantly pray for your Majesty's long life, and for your happiness both here and hereafter.<sup>1</sup>

But Queen Anne was determined to see the quarrel through. On February 9 in a brief, tense audience she received the resignations of her illustrious servants. She made some final entreaty to Marlborough, but showed herself glad to let Godolphin go. The two Ministers who had raised her strength so high at home and carried her fame so far abroad quitted her presence, entered their coaches, and drove away from St James's. The scene which followed at the Cabinet Council is well known. The Queen seated herself in her State chair at the head of the table. Harley rose with a confident air to open the first business of the day, which happened to relate to his department. "The members at first," says Coxe, whose account is based on Swift and Burnet, "appeared as if absorbed in reflection: half-

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 24. Coxe gives no date, but it was probably written on February 8, ten days after the open challenge to Harley (see p. 352). Klopp thinks that this was never intended for the Queen's eye, but was Marlborough's draft for his remarks at the audience the following day.

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smothered murmurs were then heard, and the Secretary paused. A momentary silence ensuing, the members turned to each other, with looks of surprise and uneasiness, till the Duke of Somerset arose, and, with warmth, exclaimed, 'I do not see how we can deliberate, when the Commander-in-Chief and the Lord Treasurer are absent.'"<sup>1</sup> Swift gives a rougher and probably truer version. "If your Majesty suffers that fellow," pointing to Harley, "to treat of affairs of the war without the advice of the General, I cannot serve you."<sup>2</sup> It was plain that every one agreed with him except Harley and the Queen. Harley faltered. The Duke repeated his remark, and neither the Queen nor her favourite said another word. The Council broke up in confusion. The Queen was assisted from her chair half stifled with anger and distress amid the bows of her agitated advisers. But even now—this is the measure of her grit—she did not abandon Harley. She showed in that hour in magnificent fashion the quality which had sent her grandfather to the scaffold and her father to Saint-Germain. She would not have shrunk from either fate. Absolute deadlock gripped the Government of Great Britain at a time when London was the dominating centre of world affairs.

The news spread far and wide that Marlborough and Godolphin had been dismissed by the Queen. The effect was devastating. The calculations of adroit intrigue, the hot blood of partisanship, suddenly seemed of no account. The larger values asserted themselves in a sobered London. Both Houses of Parliament—the Commons by a definite resolution—decided to conduct no business till they were better informed of these transactions. The City, with its vast new financial power, was in consternation. George of Denmark, appalled by what he heard and saw of the public mood, and strengthened by what he felt himself, implored his wife to bow to the storm. Even then it was Harley, not the Queen, who gave way. During the afternoon and evening he succumbed to the fury of pressures which bore in upon

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> *The Works of Jonathan Swift*, xv, 297.

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him from every side. He furled his standard for a better day. He advised the Queen to accept his resignation. She wept ; and he departed.

Anne was now absolutely alone ; apart from Abigail, with the pillows, with the harpsichord and the Tory gossip, she could find no one to whom she could turn. Then, and then only, did she yield. On the 10th she summoned Marlborough to her presence, and after bitter lamentations and reproaches informed him that he had his way. The dismissal of Harley was announced on February 11. The Whig Boyle, from the Exchequer, became Secretary of State ; and John Smith, the Whig Speaker of the House of Commons, took his place at the Treasury. St John, Mansell (the Comptroller of the Household), and Harcourt went out with Harley. The office of Secretary-at-War had grown enormously in importance during St John's tenure. Previously it had scarcely counted as Ministerial. In theory the Secretary-at-War was little more than a private secretary of the Commander-in-Chief. But St John had assumed charge of all military questions in the House of Commons, and with his extraordinary gifts and under war conditions had held the centre of the stage. Another Parliamentarian of the first order must be found. Marlborough chose the young Robert Walpole, who had distinguished himself by his vigorous defence of the Admiralty. In St John and Walpole he seems to have picked or found the two young men of destiny in that day for the office, the efficient conduct of which was an essential part of his power to wage war.

The Whigs now fell upon the fallen Harley. Had this master of political intrigue been content to undermine his colleagues by backstairs influence ; or was he a Jacobite betraying war secrets to the enemy ? Who could be sure that his machinations stopped short at the English Channel ? The torments to which he was subjected were merciless. Greg was condemned to death on January 19/30. The execution was postponed from week to week while a Lords Committee examined him, and it was freely asserted that Greg was offered his life if he would incriminate the ex-Secretary of

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State. Harley was, of course, innocent of anything except culpable negligence in public business. But the ordeal through which he passed was terrible. He endured it with characteristic phlegm. He asserted his innocence, he offered no explanation and declared that his life and honour were in God's keeping. William Greg, however, withstood all pressures and temptations; and history has pondered over the mysteries of his nature, which could sell his country for a paltry sum, and yet face a grisly death rather than bear false testimony against his master. When at length in April he was brought to Tyburn to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, he handed the sheriff a paper proclaiming his sole guilt and Harley's innocence.

There had been also a final scene in the House of Commons. When on February 18/29 the Government admitted that St John's figures about Almanza were true, so staggering was the fact that the crowded House sat for nearly half an hour dumbfounded, not one man caring to attempt to express its feelings. This oppressive silence brings home to us the magnificent earnestness of that long-vanished Parliament, and we feel the beating of those resolute English hearts which, in spite of so many failings and follies, built up the greatness of our island. At last the spell was broken by some member moving formally to thank the Queen for her reply.

The injuries given and received in this struggle were of the kind that men do not forget. They seared and destroyed all fellow-feeling and comradeship between the antagonists. In this bitter month will be found the explanation of the ruthless ill-usage which Marlborough was to receive four years later at the hands of Harley and St John.

Thus ended one of the decisive constitutional conflicts of our history. The authority of the Crown was once more definitely restricted. The public interest, the power of Parliament, the force of party organization, all combined might not have prevailed against the will and courage of this wrong-headed Stuart sovereign. For her part, in pursuance of her conviction, she would have squandered Marlborough, the

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Grand Alliance, and all that was bound up in their cause. But she was beaten by Marlborough's prestige without the slightest distortion of the Constitution, without a vote, without even an address. She submitted only with undying resentment. She never forgot and she never forgave. Henceforth she set herself to plan revenge. If we have called her a great queen, it is not because of her benevolence or her understanding, though both were considerable; certainly not because of her right judgment—but because of her toughness and will-power, and the part they played both for good and for ill in this expansive and glorious period.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE JACOBITE RAID

SCOTLAND chewed the thongs of union morosely 1708,  
Spring throughout the misadventures of 1707. Harley's political travellers had warned him of widespread disaffection. Hooke, who toured Scotland for him in the early summer, reported that nine-tenths of the people were against the Union. Highland clansmen, Lowland Jacobites, Whig noblemen, Covenanters, Catholics and Presbyterians, were all ripe for rebellion, though with different objects. Now, if ever, was the hour for the rightful heir to Scotland's ancient crown to set foot upon Scottish soil. Versailles, long sceptical, as we have seen, of Jacobite hopes, was convinced by far-reaching inquiry that a serious revolt would follow the landing of the "rightful sovereign of the three kingdoms" with arms, money, and supplies, and the French nucleus of an army. James Edward, *Prætensus*, now twenty, was ardent for the attempt, and around him clustered the faithful exiles of Saint-Germains. During January Dunkirk hummed with preparation. Five French battleships, a score of frigates to serve as transports conveying twelve battalions, thirteen thousand stand of arms, the gold plate, the liveries and insignia of a royal Court, were assembled. The blessing of the Pope and the proved skill of Admiral Forbin were cast into the scales for no less an object than the conversion of England and Scotland<sup>1</sup> and the dethronement of the usurper Anne.<sup>2</sup> Berwick would himself have liked to command the troops, and his services were implored by the Scottish Jacobites. But Louis XIV drew the line at risking the victor of Almanza upon so hazardous a stroke. A squadron of French frigates, six thousand soldiers—

<sup>1</sup> The Pretender's mother's letter.

<sup>2</sup> James's proclamation.



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these might be staked upon an outside chance, but Berwick—no.

The stir at Dunkirk and elsewhere was reported to Marlborough by his Secret Service in France and Holland, and it may be also through some of those strange personal channels the traces of which are deeply marked in history. At any rate, by the middle of February we see this alleged friend of the Jacobite cause, this persistent correspondent with the exiled Court, suddenly active in many directions. On the 17th he ordered Cadogan in Flanders to watch "the preparations making at Dunkirk," and

by all possible means to inform yourself of the enemy's designs, giving notice of what you can learn, by every opportunity, and if you find it requisite, by frequent expresses, both by Ostend and the Brill. . . . In case there be any good grounds to believe the enemy have formed a design of landing in these parts or in North Britain, that there be a proportionable number of her Majesty's foot forces, not only kept in readiness to embark immediately, but . . . if the enemy should embark with the intention of landing in Great Britain, before you have any other orders from hence, that then you put her Majesty's troops on ship-board with all possible speed, either at Ostend or in Zealand, and come yourself with them, to the first convenient port you can make.<sup>1</sup>

He wrote also to Lumley about the selection of the battalions, to Overkirk about replacing them in the various garrisons, and to the States to supply warships, transports, and facilities, enjoining upon all the utmost secrecy. He began to prepare and mobilize the home forces. Household troops, Foot Guards, nine battalions of infantry, and some dragoons were all that remained in England. The drafts for the English regiments in Spain depleted by Almanza were formed into provisional battalions. A regiment of horse and two of dragoons in the north of Ireland were also prepared for service. By the end of February Marlborough had from all sources a substantial force in hand. Still greater exertions were enjoined upon his high Tory, even

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 35, 36.

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Jacobite, brother, George Churchill, at the Admiralty. Without upsetting their arrangements for reinforcing the Mediterranean, the Admiralty fitted out at this rigorous season of the year fifteen British battleships, which sailed from Deal under Sir George Byng, and, together with three Dutch ships, blockaded Dunkirk before the end of February. Within a fortnight this force was nearly doubled. "Since we have got a greater strength of shipping than in all likelihood they can put to sea," wrote Marlborough, "I think we have nothing to apprehend, whatever their design may be."<sup>1</sup> Actually the British strength in the end was five times as great as the French.

Parliament was informed on March 4/15 alike of the impending invasion and of the measures taken to cope with it. It was added that the States-General desired to assist the Queen with their whole disposable force by land and sea. The double effect was remarkable. All parties rallied round the Throne. Drastic legislation against Jacobites, avowed or suspected, was voted. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. The Pretender and his adherents were proclaimed traitors and rebels. Lavish funds were provided for the defence of the realm. Yet at the same time the Commons proclaimed "that no attempts of this kind shall deter us from supporting Your Majesty in the vigorous prosecution of the present war against France until the monarchy of Spain be restored to the house of Austria, and Your Majesty have the glory to complete the recovery of the liberties of Europe."<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile at Dunkirk the event occurred. Gales drove off the blockading squadrons, and Forbin put to sea with his warships, his transports, six thousand men, and the Pretender, convalescing from measles but indomitable. Twelve hours behind them Admiral Byng, leaving a division of English and Dutch ships under Admiral Baker to guard the Flanders convoys, sailed in chase. Simultaneously all the troops waiting in England, Ireland, and at Ostend set forth

<sup>1</sup> February 20/March 2; *Dispatches*, iii, 686.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary History*, vi, 727.

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for Scotland by land and sea. Private Deane has left us a laconic record :

The English Fleet was commanded to sea to wait their [the enemy's] motion, and w<sup>th</sup> all possibillety to prevent y<sup>e</sup> designe. And a Command likewise from his Grace y<sup>e</sup> Duke of Marlborough for y<sup>e</sup> 10 Eldest Reigments of foot, whereof 7 were quartered in y<sup>e</sup> Citty of Ghent ; namely y<sup>e</sup> first Batallion of Guards, y<sup>e</sup> Earle of Orkneys <sup>1</sup> battallion, y<sup>e</sup> Duke of Arguiles, <sup>2</sup> Maj<sup>r</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Webbs, <sup>3</sup> my L<sup>d</sup> Norths, <sup>4</sup> Lef<sup>t</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Ingoldsbyes <sup>5</sup> and Co<sup>l</sup> Tattons. <sup>6</sup>

March y<sup>e</sup> 8th y<sup>e</sup> aforesaid Regiments marcht to Bruges Port ; and there imbarqued in vessels, and were towed by horses that day to Bruges 8 leagues from Ghent, commanded by Maj<sup>r</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Cudagon, and Brigadeir Sabin : where we continued untill such times as Shipping was fitted, and a Convoy ready ; on y<sup>e</sup> 15th y<sup>e</sup> Reigm<sup>ts</sup> before mentioned . . . marcht from Bruges to Ostend, a vey strong Sea Port, being 4 leagues from Bruges, and there was shipt on board y<sup>e</sup> Men of War and Transports ; for that purpose we lay till y<sup>e</sup> 17 att w<sup>ch</sup> time y<sup>e</sup> winde presenting, it blowing a fresh gale, about 10 a clock in y<sup>e</sup> morning we sett sail under [protection of] 10 Ships of War English and Dutch : under y<sup>e</sup> Command of Admirall Baker Rear Adm<sup>l</sup> of y<sup>e</sup> White Squadron. . . .

March y<sup>e</sup> 21st about 1 a clock in y<sup>e</sup> afternoon we came to anchor att Tinmouth, where we lay for further orders, laboring under many ilconveniences, haveing only y<sup>e</sup> bare Deck to lye upon, w<sup>ch</sup> hardship caused abundance of our men to bid adieu to y<sup>e</sup> world. <sup>7</sup>

By the time these much-tried soldiers reached Tynemouth the danger was over. Forbin entered the Firth of Forth and anchored near the Isle of May on the 12th/23rd. Signals made to the shore met with but vague responses. Byng was already at the mouth of the Forth. A lucky turn of wind prevented the whole expedition from being trapped. The

<sup>1</sup> Later the First Foot, the Royal Scots.

<sup>2</sup> Later the Third Foot, the Buffs (Royal East Kent).

<sup>3</sup> Later the Eighth Foot, the King's Regiment (Liverpool).

<sup>4</sup> Later the Tenth Foot, the Lincolnshire Regiment.

<sup>5</sup> Later (since disbanded) the Eighteenth Foot, the Royal Irish Regiment.

<sup>6</sup> Later the Twenty-fourth Foot, the South Wales Borderers.

<sup>7</sup> J. M. Deane, *A Journal of the Campaign in Flanders*, 1708 (1846), p. 4.

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Pretender still hoped to land at Inverness ; but all the rest now thought only of home. The sufferings of the soldiers, crowded upon the open decks in storm and icy rain, were extreme. Our own losses, as Private Deane reveals, were heavy. The French lost several thousand men from sickness and exposure. All the French vessels escaped except one, the *Salisbury*, taken from England in 1703 and "the best ship" in Forbin's fleet. This was boarded by the *Leopard*, and yielded a crowd of luckless Jacobites. Among these was the aged Lord Griffin, whom we may remember with John Churchill in James II's shipwreck of 1681 saving himself "by catching hold of a hen-coop."<sup>1</sup> The unfortunate nobleman was again in dire peril. In fact, he had but one hope—his comrade of those early days. This, however, did not fail him.

The news of the arrival of the invaders in the Firth of Forth, the rumour of their landing, and of an alleged Scottish uprising caused a panic in London. The funds fell fifteen points. The Goldsmiths' Company, which was in some respects the Tory rival of the Bank of England, started a formidable run upon that institution. The Queen, Marlborough, the Dukes of Somerset and Newcastle, Dutch merchants, Huguenot refugees, and Jewish financiers, together with all the Whig wealth, hastened to the rescue. Godolphin transferred all the Treasury gold to the Bank. The shareholders of the Bank prepared to meet a 20 per cent. call. The run was stopped. The good news arrived. The funds soared, and general rejoicings were the order of the day. No severities darkened the success. Lord Griffin, indeed, was condemned to death, but Marlborough successfully, though under much criticism, prevented his execution. This caused some disappointment. "The boys of the town," wrote Swift sardonically, "are mighty happy ; for we are to have a beheading next week, unless the Queen will interpose her mercy." Eventually the old Lord, respiteed from month to month, died in the Tower in 1710, of old age, and perhaps of a not unnatural depression.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 177.

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Thus ended somewhat ignominiously the first of the Jacobite descents. It led, however, to consequences of far-reaching importance in the party sphere. Parliament was approaching the end of a triennial term. What more deadly prelude could there be to a General Election than the seeming or imputed identification of the Tories with the frustrated invasion of the island by foreign troops? All Whig suspicions of Marlborough and Godolphin were swept away by their proven vigilance and zeal. The Queen, having felt the throne shake beneath her, her every instinct of self-preservation stirred, was glad to give expression to her feelings in language which went far beyond her normal mood. Ministers found her willing to declare her obligation "to place her chief dependence on those who had given such repeated proofs of the greatest warmth and concern, for the support of the Revolution, the security of her own person, and of the Protestant Succession."<sup>1</sup> In closing the session she allowed herself to say, "All which is dear to you is perfectly safe under my government, and must be irrecoverably lost, if ever the designs of a popish Pretender, bred up in the principles of the most arbitrary government, should take place."<sup>2</sup>

It was indeed the hour of the Whigs. Even before the election they renewed their efforts to press themselves upon the Queen. Once again they selected one of their number behind whom all their efforts should be concentrated. Somers, William III's Lord Chancellor, was, for his gifts, his dignities, and his record in history, the accepted head of the Junto. During Anne's reign he had been removed with other Whig Lords from the Privy Council. His associates now resolved that he should become its President. The demand by the victorious party for the inclusion of so eminent a statesman in the councils of the sovereign was amply justified. Indeed, the Whigs might boast their moderation in asking only for this. Not only did the five Lords sustain the request, but it was endorsed by the moderate Whig members of the Cabinet, the Dukes of Devonshire and Newcastle. The

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary History*, vi, 729.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 731.

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Queen met their first overtures with the answer that she could not displace Lord Pembroke, with whom she was entirely pleased. The Whig Dukes then reduced their claim to the simple inclusion of Somers in the Cabinet. Anne, taken by surprise at the audience, could think of no grounds for refusal other than that the Cabinet was full enough already. Pressed from all sides, the Queen carried her complaints to Marlborough.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

KENSINGTON  
April 22/May 3, 1708

The occasion of my writing to you, at this time, is to give you an account of a visit I had yesterday from Lord Privy Seal and Lord Steward, in which they proposed my taking Lord Somers into the Cabinet Council, without giving him any employment, since I could not be prevailed upon to make him President, laying a great stress on its being necessary for my service. Their arguments did not at all convince me of the reasonableness nor the propriety of the thing. But all the answer I made was that the proposition was a very new thing, and that I thought there were enough of the Cabinet Council already; that I depended upon their assistance in carrying on my business; and had no thoughts of employing any but those that served me well in the Parliament, and had no leaning to any others, and would countenance all that served me faithfully. This is the sense of what I said to them; and this morning I gave this account to Lord Treasurer, who had heard nothing of this matter before, but joined in the two Dukes' proposal, using a great many arguments to persuade me to comply with it; and, I must own to you, did not convince me any more than what I had heard before on the same subject, though I have a much greater respect for him than for either of the others, *looking upon it to be utter destruction to me to bring Lord Somers into my service*. And I hope you will not join in soliciting me in this thing, though Lord Treasurer tells me you will; for it is what I can never consent to.

You are very happy to be out of the disagreeable and vexatious things that I am more or less continually made uneasy with, which makes me not wonder at your not coming back as you

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promised. I pray God bless and direct you in everything, and never let it be in anybody's power to do me ill offices with you, but be assured that I am, and will be ever, your faithful servant.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough, now at the front anxiously watching the French army gathering around Mons, urged her to comply. His letter shows that he was as good a judge of electioneering as of military matters. Evidently the Queen, presumably on Harley's forecast, hoped that the Tories would hold their own at the polls, and Marlborough was at pains to undeceive her.

### *Marlborough to the Queen*

GHENT  
May 9, 1708

. . . I do not doubt but care is taken to incline your Majesty to believe that the Tories will have, this next Parliament, a majority in the House of Commons. But I beg your Majesty to consider, before it is too late, how that is possible, after the attempt that has been made by France for the Pretender; and that the greatest part of that party is suspected, either to have known, or at least to have wished success to the attempt. Besides, their continual endeavours to incline the people to a peace which, in the circumstances we are in, can only tend to the lessening your Majesty, and consequently the advancement of the Pretender's interest.

This being the truth, how is it possible, madam, that the honest people of England, who wish well to you, and the carrying on of the war, can be prevailed upon to choose such men as they believe would ruin all that is dear to them? If what I have the honour to write to your Majesty be the truth, for God's sake consider what may be the consequences of refusing the request of the Dukes of Newcastle and Devonshire; since it will be a demonstration not only to them, but to everybody, that Lord Treasurer and I have no credit with your Majesty, but that you are guided by the insinuation of Mr Harley.

We are assured that the Duke of Burgundy is coming to the head of this army with the King of France's leave and orders to venture a battle. I shall be so far from avoiding it that I shall seek it, thinking it absolutely necessary for your service; so

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 72-73.

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that God only knows whether this may not be the last I may have the honour to write you, which makes me beg with the same earnestness as if I were sure it were to be my last that your Majesty will let no influence or persuasion hinder you, not only in this, but in all your worldly affairs, to follow the advice and good counsel of Lord Treasurer, who will never have any thought but what is for your honour and true interest.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough attached grave importance to the reception of his advice. "If she be obstinate," he wrote to Godolphin, "I think it is a plain declaration to all the world that you and I have no credit, and that all is governed underhand by Mr Harley and Mrs Masham."<sup>2</sup>

The Queen ignored Marlborough's advice about Somers, but in a letter of European importance assured him that she would in no way lend herself to peace negotiations.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

May 6/17, 1708

. . . I have been so tired to-day with importunities that come from the Whigs that I have not spirits left to open my afflicted heart so freely and so fully as I intended. . . .

I can now only tell you that as to what you mention, and what the Lord Treasurer told me some time ago, of your being pressed in two conferences for the making steps towards a peace, I am entirely of your opinion, thinking it neither for my honour nor interest; and do assure you that whatever insinuations my enemies may make to the contrary, I shall never at any time give my consent to a peace, but upon safe and honourable terms. Excuse my answering nothing more of your letter at this time, and be so just to me as not to let any misrepresentations that may be made of me have any weight with you, for that would be a greater trouble to me than can be expressed. I cannot end without begging you to be very careful of yourself, there being nobody, I am sure, that prays more heartily for your preservation than her that will live and die most sincerely your humble servant.

The Prince desires his service to you.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 74-76.

<sup>2</sup> May 8; Coxe, iv, 75.

<sup>3</sup> Coxe, iv, 83-89.



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The election was fought out in May. A month before both Harley and the Queen nursed secret hopes of a Tory victory. Now the Tories were taken at a hopeless disadvantage. The shadow of the frustrated invasion overlay the land. The Whigs exploited the occasion to the full. In manifestos and speeches they endeavoured to confound the Tories with the Jacobites, and their political antagonists with the French. Brutally accused by their opponents of bringing the curse of civil war and foreign invasion upon the land, distrusted by important moderate elements, abandoned at this critical moment, though only for the moment, by the Queen, in whom their hopes were set, it was marvellous the Tories were not annihilated in the constituencies. They were stubborn folk, and in those days Englishmen did not run in droves, like their modern descendants. Harley, in spite of the invasion scare, in spite of Greg's treason, and all the odium thrust upon him both by the Whigs and the Court, was returned for his Welsh seat (New Radnor). St John, having quarrelled with his father, patron of the family borough of Wootton Bassett, sought a refuge in over-represented Tory Cornwall. He failed to find it. No doubt his cynical discarding of the Occasional Conformity Bill for the sake of office three years before had left an impression upon the Tory Party managers, both national and local, which not all his brilliancy and eloquence could efface. He passed for the moment into complete eclipse. Burying himself in the depths of the country, he *affected to find in horse and hound, in books and agriculture*, a solace for his exile from affairs. As the election results flowed in it became certain that the Whigs would be masters of the new House of Commons. In fact, they secured a majority of over a hundred, and thus the Lords of the Junto became possessed of lawful and predominant power in both Houses, exercisable as soon as Parliament should meet.

Parliament only sat in the winter. It was now no more than June. The Whigs felt that the Queen should recognize the results of the polls by embracing them forthwith in a

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definitely party administration. The event, however, struck Anne differently. She was surprised and chagrined by the Tory defeat. All her prejudices against the Whigs were redoubled by their triumphs. She understood, and Harley must have explained to her, how narrow and accidental had been the margins by which their previous plans had been cast down. When Secretary of State, Harley had looked forward upon a very solid basis to forming a Government with or even without Marlborough in January or February 1708, and, aided by the favour of the Crown, to winning the General Election. Marlborough's prestige and his fidelity to Godolphin had ruptured Harley's scheme of government. The Jacobite raid had spoiled his chances in the constituencies. The Queen resented these unforeseeable happenings. In the face of what Sunderland called "the best Wig Parliament that has been since the revolution,"<sup>1</sup> Anne was more cordially Tory than ever before. Already she had forgotten the Jacobite scare. She would not hear of new Whigs in the Cabinet. The supplies had been voted for the year; Marlborough was in the field at the head of the armies, and until the money ran short the Whigs could drum their heels in the coffee-houses, or the antechambers—if they could get so far.

Anne's distress and discontent vented itself upon Sunderland. The Whig Secretary of State had used his office, his influence, and, as far as he dared, the Queen's name to rig the election of the Scottish peers in his party interests. In a letter to the Duke of Roxburgh he had written: "I would not have you be bully'd by the Court-Party, for the Queen herself cannot support that faction long."<sup>2</sup> This undoubted disloyalty to the principles upon which the compromise of the Queen's Government was framed, and which Marlborough and Godolphin represented, was exposed to her up the back stairs by Harley. All her dislike of Sunderland, all her resentments at his having been forced upon her, now found vehement expression. Her name had been used for a party

<sup>1</sup> Sunderland to Newcastle; B.M., Lansdowne MSS., 1236, f. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph, *The Other Side of the Question* (1742), p. 380. Author anonymous: "A Woman of Quality." Ralph is the name of the journalist who probably compiled it.

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purpose, contrary, not only to her feelings, but to the whole character of the Government, which Marlborough's authority had wrung from her as a final settlement. She became so enraged that only her respect for Marlborough and for Marlborough's power prevented her from taking the seals of office out of hand from his son-in-law. She protested to him indignantly in two letters of June 18/29 and June 22/July 3.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

June 18/29, 1708

. . . There is no wonder opposition should increase when one of my own servants is at the head of it, as you will see by the enclosed, which I could not forbear sending you to give you a view of the ill-treatment I receive from the person that is mentioned in it: there are larger accounts come to-day from other hands, all to the same purpose; it is such a behaviour, I believe, as never was known, and what I really cannot bear, nor what no other I dare say would one minute; but I am willing out of sincere kindness and consideration I have for you to defer taking away the seals till I receive again more confirmation of what the enclosed contains; not that I have doubt of the truth of it; all Lord S.'s own actions having shown so much of the same spirit. . . It is impossible to bear such usage; and I am sure you are too reasonable, if you consider this matter impartially, to blame me when I send for the seals, and be assured I shall ever be the same sincere and faithful friend to you as ever.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

June 22/July 13, 1708

\*I believe you expect to hear from me this post, and therefore I writt to lett you know I have had better succession [*sic*] in ye Election in Scotland than could be expected after such Opposition. . . . Ld Sunderland has assured me he had neither directly nor indirectly made use of my name, but at ye same time owned he had writt his own thoughts about ye Election to some Lds of ye Squadron, as they call them, . . . tho he did not mention my name I think in effect what he has done is ye same thing, . . . soe I cannot but still resent this usage very much. . . .<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough Papers, H.M.C., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Blenheim MSS.

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Apparently the Queen was disconcerted by his silence, for she wrote again on July 3/14, when, unknown to her, her armies were gathering the spoils of victory, a more equable and mollifying letter.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

WINDSOR

July 3/14, 1708

I am very sorry you continue still in the desire you mentioned to the Lord Treasurer of retiring after the campagne, . . . but though you are never so desirous to be at quiet, I conclude, till you see in what condition you can leave things abroad and how you find things at home, you can take no resolution, and therefore I will not now trouble you with everything I could say to persuade you out of this melancholy thought; but leave it to you to consider how mortifying a thing it must be for me if ever you put it in practice. . . . What you desire concerning Lord Treasurer was not at all necessary, for I have so true a sense of his friendship to me, and so real a value and esteem for him, that if ever anybody should endeavour to do him any ill office, it would have no effect upon me. . . . Great care must be taken that no cause be given to our friends abroad to think that there is any fear of business going ill in England, and you may be sure I will advise in everything with those you desire; the parties are such bugbeares that I dare not venture to write my mind freely of either of them without a cypher for fear of any accident. I pray God keep me out of the hands of both of them.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough received the earlier menacing or disquieting messages in the crisis of marches and manœuvres which preceded battle. So obvious an affront as the public dismissal of his own son-in-law at such a moment seemed likely to undermine his authority before all men. Harassed by the Queen's attitude, he was also incensed by Sunderland's behaviour. All that we know of Sunderland during the summer of 1708 shows that his only loyalty was to the Junto. For the Queen, for the compromise Cabinet of which he was a member, for Marlborough, his father-in-law, to whom he owed so much, for Sarah, who had wrecked herself to help him—nay, for the

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cause of the Alliance, he cared in comparison nothing : the party pledge was his only tie. Thus we see him using throughout the year language about Godolphin and even Marlborough which in cold hostility equalled the worst that from the opposite angle Harley could whisper through Abigail to the Queen.

Marlborough, at grips with a superior French army, worn and wearied, ill and fevered, was, as we shall see, roused after a brief collapse to the mood of Napoleon before Wagram ; “*La bataille répondra.*” He cast political intrigues from him with inexpressible loathing. He left the Queen’s letters unanswered, and mounted his horse.

## CHAPTER XIX

### EUGENE COMES NORTH

PRINCE EUGENE, according to Schulenberg, said of <sup>1708,</sup> the campaign of 1708, "He who has not seen this has <sup>Spring</sup> seen nothing." This remark is typical of the accounts of eyewitnesses of all ranks on either side. The captious Goslinga ends his tale with the words, "Thus ended this dangerous and remarkable campaign, one of the most glorious which was ever made." And our Private Deane, of the First Guards, calls it "very long, tiresome, troublesome, mischievous and strange, yet very successful." Indeed, it is not easy to find operations more novel and suggestive to the student of military affairs. We have the two greatest commanders of the age at the head of troops from many confederate states, surmounting the vices of coalitions, beginning under a serious misfortune, courting undue risks to gain victory in the field, and undertaking the greatest siege till then recorded, with their communications cut. We see besiegers besieged while still besieging; preserving existence from day to day only by the narrowest margins and chances; isolated and invested in the midst of enemy territory, yet never relinquishing their prey; fighting on in defiance of custom and season till the end of December; finally overcoming every obstruction and succeeding in every detail against the forces of a homogeneous French army, which never outnumbered them by less than six to five.

It is worth while, in order the better to recognize the sequence of events, to set forth the major episodes beforehand: namely, the loss of Ghent and Bruges; the battle of Oudenarde; the investment of Lille; the convoy of the siege-train from Brussels; the French attempt to raise the siege; the severance of the communications with Brussels; the opening of new communications with the sea; the critical action



## MARLBOROUGH

of Wynendael ; the bombardment and assaults of the city of Lille ; the inundations and aquatic warfare for supplies ; the total isolation of the allied armies ; the timely surrender of the city of Lille ; the opening of a third line of communications from the sea ; the French diversion against Brussels ; the forcing of the Scheldt and the relief of Brussels by Marlborough and Eugene ; the fall of the citadel of Lille ; the final recapture of Ghent and Bruges by the Allies.

Encouraged by his success in 1707, Louis XIV resolved, as Marlborough had predicted,<sup>1</sup> to gain the mastery in Flanders. By a hard effort he brought to the field the most numerous army which the world had seen for centuries. Nearly a hundred and ten thousand men, forming 131 battalions and 216 squadrons, assembled during May around Mons. His intention was to give the effective command against Marlborough to Marshal Vendôme. His eldest grandson, Fénelon's pupil, the blameless Duke of Burgundy, having, however, expressed a desire to serve, was placed nominally at the head of the army, and the Elector of Bavaria was constrained to transfer himself to the Upper Rhine. Vendôme favoured the change, thinking that the inexperienced prince of the blood would hamper him less than the able, war-toughened Elector.

Max Emmanuel, on the other hand, was loath to leave Flanders. What Marlborough had foretold in 1706 had come to pass. The cities of Belgium were seething with discontent under the rule and exactions of the Dutch. The Elector felt himself possessed of real influence with the Belgian people. Moreover, he feared lest his removal should be the prelude to peace negotiations with Holland at his expense. The French Court, however, consoled him with the prospect of so strong an army upon the Upper Rhine that by a brilliant campaign he might even regain his own Bavaria. "On account of the disgust that subsisted"<sup>2</sup> between the Elector and Villars, the latter was made to exchange commands with Berwick, who had already been appointed to the southern front (Dauphiné). Berwick, when

<sup>1</sup> See p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> Berwick, *Memoirs*, ii, 3.

## EUGENE COMES NORTH

he arrived on the Rhine, like Vendôme in Flanders, was held responsible commander, with the extra duty of keeping a royal or exalted figurehead out of mischief and in good humour, and of securing to such personages the glory to which their birth entitled them. Neither of them was, however, willing to be a puppet or even a passenger. When we dwell upon Marlborough's troubles with the Dutch field Deputies and recalcitrant allies, it must not be forgotten that similar vexations often afflicted the marshals of France. Not only had they to endure a divided authority, but also a persistent interference by almost daily couriers from the Great King himself, to whom all decisive issues were referred.

Indeed, once Eugene had joined Marlborough their perfect comradeship and pre-eminence established a higher unity of command than had ever been seen in the war. "The Princes," as they came to be called in the confederacy, settled everything between themselves. Neither ever allowed a whisper of disagreement to circulate. They were apparently immune from any kind of jealousy of each other, were proof against every form of mischief-making or intrigue, and in the field at any rate were in practice absolute. The councils of war were frequent, and many opinions were heard. But once "the Princes" had finally spoken all bowed to their judgment. Without this new fact at the allied headquarters the extraordinary operations which these chapters describe, so intricate, so prolonged, and contrary on many occasions to the accepted principles of war, could never have been achieved.

Marlborough, Eugene, and Heinsius met at The Hague on April 12 to concert the general strategy of the year. It immediately became obvious that Eugene would not go to Spain. The Emperor would not agree; Eugene did not want to go; Marlborough did not mean him to go. Thus the pet project of the British Parliament and Cabinet which had been referred to this conference was promptly dismissed. The theatre was judged minor, and the policy should be

## MARLBOROUGH

defensive. Who, then, should command? This also had been largely settled by Marlborough. A fortnight earlier Stanhope had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British forces there. He had travelled to The Hague in Marlborough's company. He attended all the meetings. But it was not Marlborough's policy to send any important British detachment to Spain. Only about two thousand British troops were actually capable of taking the field. Marlborough therefore had procured from the Cabinet authority to pay the expense of a considerable reinforcement of Imperial troops. He also proposed that the Palatine contingent in Italy, seven thousand strong, under General Reh binder, hired jointly by England and Holland, should be sent to the Peninsula. This was the most he could do; it was also the least. The great preponderance of Germanic troops made it necessary that an Imperial commander should also be appointed. Starhemberg, reputed "the best General of the age for the defensive,"<sup>1</sup> was at that time commanding against the Hungarian rebels. It was decided to transfer him to Spain. This implied that Stanhope's military rôle would be minor or nil. However, as he was entrusted with the payment of £10,000 a month from the British Government to Charles III, he was assured of some attention; and his instructions from the Cabinet charged him to "enlarge the bounds" of the operations in Spain by land and sea. To console the British Parliament upon the withholding of Eugene from Spain special emphasis was laid upon the naval aspect of the campaign—namely, the need of capturing a safe sea-base.

It was already plain that no forces could be provided for an important offensive in Dauphiné under Victor Amadeus. Marlborough, serenely unmoved by the Titian hangings, acquiesced at once in this restriction of the southern front. Every one at The Hague welcomed the idea that Eugene should fight in the north. But a further complication remained.

The Elector of Hanover had with great difficulty been at last induced to accept the Rhine command as Imperial

<sup>1</sup> N. Tindal, *Continuation of Rapin's History of England*, iv, 97.



GEORGE LEWIS, ELECTOR OF HANOVER  
Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*By permission of David Milore, Esq*



## EUGENE COMES NORTH

Generalissimo. He had viewed the arrival of Prince Eugene in the north with disfavour. He saw himself eclipsed in reputation, and feared—with justice, as it proved—that his troops would be diverted or that his rôle would become subsidiary. Not only because of the difficulty of finding an Imperial commander-in-chief, but as a substantial ally, and heir to the British throne, Elector George Lewis of Hanover was a figure of the highest importance throughout the confederacy, and especially to Marlborough. Nevertheless, when Marlborough and Eugene came together their war-thought prevailed over all other considerations. Eugene at first proposed to Marlborough that the main allied effort should be made along the Moselle and also across the Rhine. Thirty thousand men should be withdrawn from Flanders to Coblenz, making a Moselle army of seventy thousand, which Eugene would command. In conjunction with the Elector of Hanover's Rhine army of forty thousand men, Marlborough's abortive plan of 1705 would be tried again under more hopeful conditions. But the States-General would not agree, in the face of the heavy French concentration proceeding daily on their front, and magnified by rumour, to strip themselves of so large a part of their defence. Marlborough was unwilling to weaken the Flanders army. He could use the frustrated invasion of Scotland against moving his forces away from the sea. He warned Eugene from his own bitter experience that the assembly of the German contingents upon the Moselle would be fatally delayed; and the French would seize the initiative in Flanders long before the Moselle army could be assembled.

Accordingly he proposed to Eugene that, although the three armies should be formed, and every pretence made of an invasion of France by the Moselle, yet at the proper moment secretly and suddenly Eugene should carry whatever troops had gathered on the Moselle to join the main army in Flanders; and that in the few days before the French could bring similar reinforcements from the Rhine he and Eugene should fall upon them with the superior strength of a hundred and twenty thousand men, and force a decisive

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battle. This idea of a super-Blenheim commended itself to Prince Eugene. The two agreed to confine their secret to the narrowest circle. By these plans the French were remarkably deceived. With the impressions of Toulon strong in their minds, they still feared a major offensive in Dauphiné. Everything that leaked out from Briançon's office in London about such schemes misled them. Completely mystified in this theatre by the allied strategy, they provided a substantial army to guard their southern front and sent Marshal Villars to command it.

As a part of his main scheme Marlborough was still attracted by the idea of a "descent." He believed that practically all the French regular troops were engaged on the various fronts, and that nothing but encampments of militia guarded the long coasts of France. Even if a serious landing was not made he hoped that the appearance of a substantial force in transports, escorted by a fleet, now here, now there, would draw far more than its own numbers from the main armies. We have seen the fate which awaited the troops of the first "descent." Now, at the beginning of 1708, a second force under General Erle of eleven English battalions was assembled in the Isle of Wight with the necessary shipping and escort, to be used on the Belgian coast or against the French Channel ports in conjunction with Marlborough's operations as he should direct. This, as we shall see, played a decisive part.

Thus it was settled that Starhemberg and Stanhope should stand on the defensive in Spain; that Victor Amadeus should play a minor rôle in Dauphiné; that Eugene should concentrate upon the Moselle, as if to work with the Elector of Hanover on the Rhine, but that suddenly thereafter he should join Marlborough for a surprise battle in Flanders; and, lastly, that an amphibious descent should be prepared as a contributory diversion.

The first step in pursuance of this general plan was to reconcile the Elector of Hanover to the preparatory formation of the three armies in the north. For this purpose Eugene insisted that Marlborough should accompany him

## EUGENE COMES NORTH

to Hanover. Disregarding the entreaties of Godolphin and Sarah that he should return home, if only for a fortnight, to save the political situation, of which more later, Marlborough set out for Hanover in the third week of April. His report to Godolphin (The Hague, May 3) speaks for itself.<sup>1</sup>

I am now thoroughly convinced, if I had avoided being at Hanover at the same time with Prince Eugene, not only the project made at The Hague had miscarried, but also these people would have laid the fault at my door.

After a very great deal of uneasiness the Elector has consented to the project for three armies; but we have been obliged to leave on the Rhine two Imperial regiments more than we designed, so that Prince Eugene will have 2000 horse less on the Moselle; and *as for the joining the two armies [Marlborough and Eugene], we thought it best not to acquaint the Elector with it, so that I expect when that is put in execution, he will be very angry*; but since the good of the campaign depends upon it, I know no remedy but patience.

In fact, though Marlborough's letter does not mention it, he had been forced also himself to transfer five thousand troops to the Rhine army, thus providing the Elector with forty-seven thousand men, who were destined to stand virtually idle during the whole of the campaign. Moreover, the Elector never forgave him for the concealment, and afterwards, as George I, he was not without opportunities of marking his displeasure.

Lastly, it was understood between the princes that Marlborough might have to fight a battle before the junction of the armies could be made. "We are assured," he wrote to the Queen (May 9),

that the Duke of Burgundy is coming to the head of this army with the King of France's leave and orders to venture a battle. I shall be so far from avoiding it that I shall seek it, thinking it absolutely necessary for your service, *so that God only knows whether this may not be the last I may have the honour to write you.* . . .<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 76. For full text see pp. 366-367.



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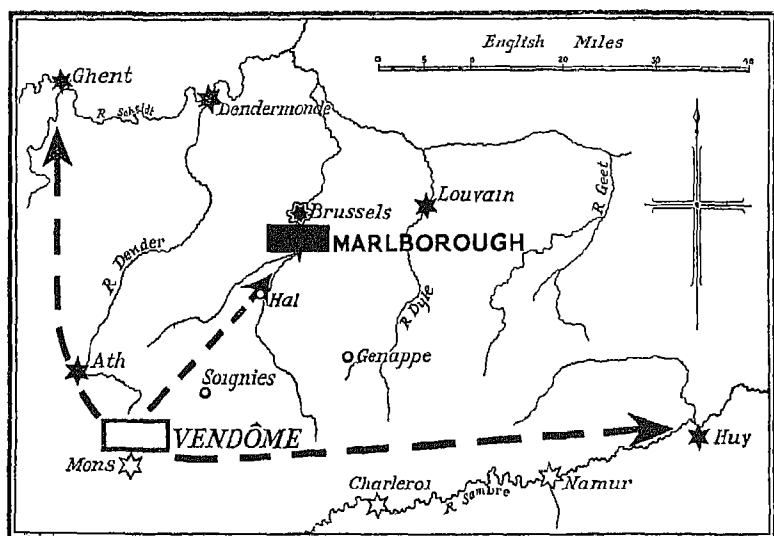
This histrionic note mingles more than once in Marlborough's later letters to Queen Anne. It marks the decline in their relationship. He never wrote like this in any campaign before 1707. Its lack of reserve is excusable only by the crises of the Queen's personal attitude and the political factions at work around her. But the same conditions that prompted the Captain-General to strike the note led the Queen to disregard it.

The months of May and June were one of Marlborough's periods of silent stress. In England the impact of the Whigs upon the Queen had produced a dangerous deadlock. All Holland, especially the burghers of Amsterdam, lent themselves to the demand for peace negotiations, even negotiations to be opened by the Allies. All Belgium was utterly wearied of the Dutch, and its great fortress towns were alive with conspiracy. Eugene's army, as Marlborough had foreseen, had scarcely begun to assemble. The French were ready to take the field with about a hundred and ten thousand men collected around Mons, and Marlborough faced them with 112 battalions and 197 squadrons, or almost ninety thousand, in his camps to the south of Brussels. Indeed, Louis XIV announced to his Court on May 24 that his reports from the armies led him to believe that a general engagement would be fought before the end of the month.

A wealth of alternatives presented themselves to the French High Command. Vendôme persuaded Louis XIV to approve the siege of Huy as a provocation to battle. It was a small undertaking, and if Marlborough sought to interrupt it the whole army could meet him in country favorable to the more powerful French cavalry and offer no helpful enclosures to the much-respected Confederates' foot. Burgundy wished to march directly towards Brussels to threaten the Dutch Barrier and test the alleged disaffection of the Belgians. Marlborough himself apprehended a third plan towards the coast, beginning with a siege of Ath and aiming at Ghent, Bruges, and Antwerp. Later on we shall see that his instinct proved sound. For the moment Vendôme agreed with Burgundy's view, and

## EUGENE COMES NORTH

on May 26 the French army marched suddenly by night to Soignies. Marlborough advanced to Hal to confront them, and a battle seemed imminent. On June 1, however, the French moved eastward towards Nivelles, threatening Louvain; whereupon Marlborough repeated his retreat of the previous year by a very long march (thirty-six miles in thirty hours and drenching rain). He passed around Brussels, and

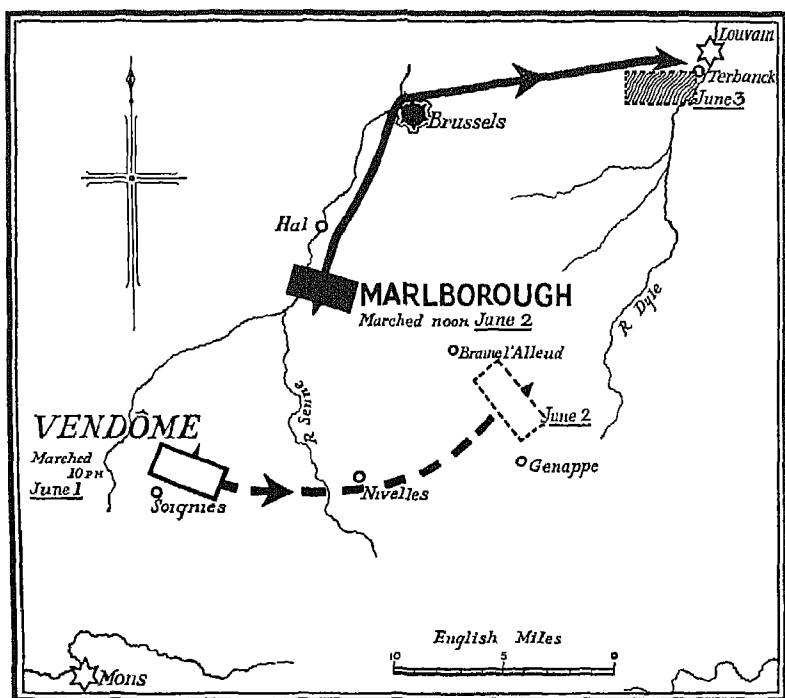


VENDÔME'S CHOICES (MAY 1708)

reached Terbanck, behind the Dyle, on June 3. The French, again confronted, halted between Genappe and Braine l'Alleud. In these positions both armies lay for the rest of June, the French in doubt what to choose, and Marlborough waiting on their choice and for Eugene. The Deputy Goslinga deemed Marlborough's retirement pusillanimous, and recorded his usual calumnies upon it. But the Duke pursued his strategy with phlegm. At Terbanck he was safe. There he covered Brussels and Louvain, and thence he could move by his many prepared routes to parry attacks so divergent as upon Huy on the Meuse or Ath on the Dender. Meanwhile he contained a superior hostile army; but time was precious.

## MARLBOROUGH

One discerning eye had early pierced his secret. Berwick had ridiculed the airy plans of an invasion of Germany with which the French Court had soothed Max Emmanuel.



MOVEMENTS IN THE FIRST WEEK OF JUNE 1708

He persuaded the Elector by soldierly argument that

they [the Allies] would . . . be well pleased to see us amuse ourselves with operations which would be to no other advantage but merely that of saving the reputation of the general; while Prince Eugene, *in imitation of the Duke of Marlborough's conduct in 1704*, would make a sudden incursion into Flanders with a suitable force to crush the King's army and invade France upon that side.

Berwick therefore thought it his duty "principally to watch the movements of the enemy," in order to send the

## EUGENE COMES NORTH

Duke of Burgundy "troops in proportion as detachments should be made by them."<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough was soon conscious, from the way Berwick disposed his troops, of his nephew's suspicious vigilance. Gradually prospects of making a superior concentration against Vendôme faded. "The disappointment of the Palatine troops,"<sup>2</sup> he wrote to Godolphin (June 11),

and Eugene not being able to put in execution, by at least a fortnight, what was agreed between him and me, gives great disadvantage. However, I have taken my measures that nothing may be wanting at his arrival, being persuaded that our greatest hopes must be in what we shall be able to do in the first four or five days; for their [Berwick's] foot will be able to join them as soon, if not sooner than ours. But if Prince Eugene uses that diligence he has promised, he may, with his horse, join me some days before they can, by stealing a march, which time we must make use of. . . . I have been busy every day in reviewing the troops. The great part are in extreme good order.<sup>3</sup>

And to Sarah:

Whenever I have any reason, and my mind a little at ease, I make sure of that time to write to my dear soul. The post does not go till to-morrow, but as I am that morning to see the left wing of horse, I make use of this time to tell you that I am in my health, I thank God, as well as one of my age, and that has not his mind very much at ease, can be; for what I concerted with Prince Eugene will not be executed by fifteen days so soon as was resolved, which will be an advantage to the Duke of Vendôme, by giving him time; but the slowness of the Germans is such that we must always be disappointed. . . . As for us in this country, we have a very good army, but the French think themselves more numerous; however, I hope, with the blessing of God, that this campaign will not pass without some good success on our side. You may easily believe me when I tell you that I do from my heart wish that the favourable account I now give you of the posture of our armies may meet with no disappointment. . . .<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, ii, 7.

<sup>2</sup> A separate contingent additional to those ordered to Spain.

<sup>3</sup> Coxe, iv, 112-114.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

## MARLBOROUGH

To Eugene he wrote on the same day :

June 11, 1707

You will have learned on your arrival that the Elector of Bavaria [advised by Berwick] has sent a strong detachment towards the Moselle, which will doubtless march forward, in proportion as your troops advance, so you will easily judge that for a beginning we can rely only on the cavalry, *with which I request you to hasten in all diligence* ; for we can only reckon on a surprise which will depend on the little time you may take for your march between the Moselle and the Meuse. *If the Palatines are not now arrived, you will please not to wait for them* ; and as soon as I know the day you will be at Maestricht, I will send some one to meet you, and acquaint you with my projects.

If you can gain only forty-eight hours, I will make my dispositions for the moment of your arrival, and with the blessing of heaven we may profit so well by these two days as to feel the good effects of it the rest of the campaign. *You will order the infantry to hasten as much as possible to Maestricht, where they will receive directions for their further march.*

The two armies have remained in their present camps, and there is no appearance of a change, till I have the news which I expect from your Highness. I have employed this time in making an exact review of the troops, which are in so good a condition that it would gratify your Highness to see them.<sup>1</sup>

This letter is interesting because it shows the relations between Marlborough and Eugene at this time. We see Marlborough giving the definite orders of a superior commander. Moreover, Eugene fully accepts the position. "Your Highness," he wrote, "may be convinced I will omit nothing to press on my march from Rheinfels. I will give you due notice by courier, being myself extremely impatient to assure you in person of my respect . . ." <sup>2</sup>

Marlborough used the protracted delays in reviewing the army. Napoleon was accustomed in his greatest days to take every opportunity of inspecting his troops division by division. He used to assemble ten thousand men at a time, and spend the whole day with them, studying their condition, hearing complaints from all ranks, and becoming

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 116-117.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.



PRINCE EUGENE OF SAVOY  
Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*By permission of the Duke of Marlborough*



## EUGENE COMES NORTH

personally known to the men. Marlborough may well have been his exemplar in this, for during this month he saw the whole allied army in detachments of eight to ten thousand a day, and was increasingly satisfied with its quality and spirit. But the delays of the Germans began to have serious results. To Godolphin he wrote on June 28 :

Prince Eugene thinks the Elector will not approve of his march, which is the reason of his not acquainting him sooner with my letter, *so that he might not have it in his power to hinder the march, which he thinks otherwise he would do.* That which gives me the greatest uneasiness is that I find Prince Eugene thinks that their horse cannot join me in less than ten days, and that their foot must have fourteen or fifteen days. If they cannot make greater expedition, I fear the horse of the Duke of Berwick will get before them. . . . Since the disappointments Prince Eugene has met with have lost us above a month, and that the enemy know too much of our design, the best thing we can hope for is that we may be able to oblige them to come to some action.<sup>1</sup>

On June 29 the Prince started on his 150-mile march from Coblenz with forty-three squadrons and eighteen battalions—only fifteen instead of the originally hoped-for forty thousand—but still a formidable reinforcement. But Berwick was also hastening to Flanders with fifty-five squadrons and thirty-four battalions (twenty-seven thousand men), and Eugene could not hope to be more than two or three days ahead of him even with his cavalry. The impending climax was apprehended in the secret circle at home. Sarah evidently bent beneath her anxieties, but who should reproach a soldier's wife in such an hour ?

"You are so kind," wrote Marlborough (June 25), "as to be in pain as to what may happen when Prince Eugene comes. Put your trust in God, as I do, and be assured that I think I can't be unhappy as long as you are kind."<sup>2</sup>

At this time, as was usual in a crisis, his mind played placidly with homely topics. Sarah had long desired a great house in London, and John made no difficulty about the

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 120-121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.



## MARLBOROUGH

heavy expense. His economies were usually upon small matters mostly affecting himself, and arose from his dislike of frittering money. A hundred thousand pounds for some important object dear to his wife did not afflict him. But his opinions about Marlborough House, and especially about house-building, deserve the attention of all who lack that experience.

*John to Sarah*

*July 1st, 1708*

\* I have receiv'd yours from St Albans, and am glad to find the Windows you are making please you. But as for myself, I am so desirous of living at Woodstock that I should not much Care to do anything but what is necessary anywhere else. In my Opinion what you write of Vanbrugh ought to please any reasonable Man. And besides the reasons you give against a Pension, 'tis more for his Interest to stay till something happens that may be lasting. You ask my Opinion, which is best for building your House at London, three lives, or 50 years. I should think the Term of Years much the best. But I would have you follow your own Inclination in it. You know I never lik'd to build it at all. And I am Confident you will find 'twill cost you much more Money than the thing is worth. You may build a better Apartment than you have now, but you will never have as many Conveniences as in your Lodgings. *And you may depend on it, 'twill cost you double the Money they have estimated.* 'Tis not a proper Place for a great House: And I am sure, when you have built a little one, you won't like it. So that if you have not set your Heart upon it I should advise you to think well of it. *For 'tis more advisable to buy a House than to build one.*<sup>1</sup>

The moment (July 2) had now come to inform the States-General that the whole Moselle army was marching to Flanders.

Having reflected on the situation of our affairs in this country, and considered those on the Moselle, and observing the little probability of supplying the army of Prince Eugene with all the requisites, so as to act offensively and with

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS. The remainder of this letter, beginning, "Though we are in the Month of July, I am now by a fire," is printed in Coxe, iv, 90-91.

## EUGENE COMES NORTH

vigour; and being confirmed in my opinion by a resolution of your high Mightinesses, communicated to me by the Deputies, I have imparted to Prince Eugene and to Count Rechteren my opinion that it will be more advantageous to the interests of the common cause for the army on the Moselle to join us in Brabant without delay, and entreated them, should they be of my opinion, to communicate the same to the Elector of Hanover, and to begin their march as soon as possible. These measures being taken in conformity with the approbation of the field Deputies, I doubt not but they will give notice to your high Mightinesses. Nevertheless, I would not fail to inform you that I have just received from Prince Eugene intelligence that his army commenced their march last Friday, the cavalry advancing by long forced marches, while the infantry rapidly followed; and that it was his intention to arrive in our camp on the 5th or 6th, to concert with me the operations, according to our arrangement; that as soon as the cavalry shall approach we shall move directly upon the enemy, and bring on a battle, trusting in God to bless our designs, and hoping that I shall soon have an opportunity of sending you good news.<sup>1</sup>

The ink was scarcely dry upon this letter when news arrived that the French army was about to move.

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 123-124.

## CHAPTER XX

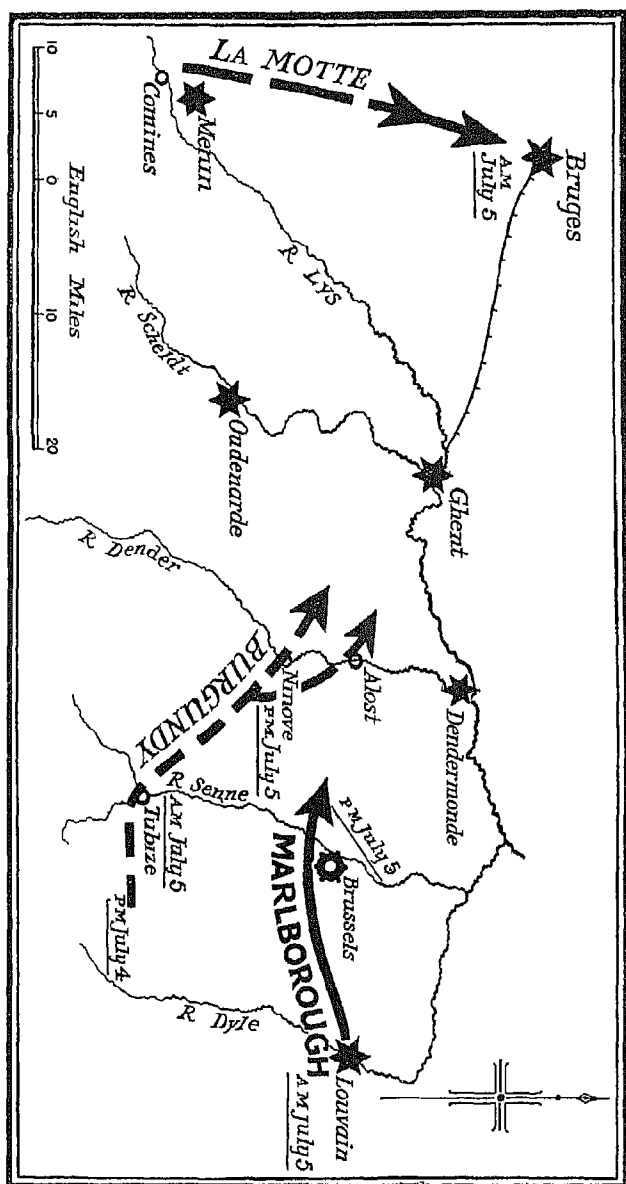
### THE SURPRISE OF GHENT AND BRUGES

1708,  
July 4-10

THE hatred which the Dutch occupation had aroused in the Belgian people in the two years since Ramillies had made the former French yoke seem light by contrast. Count Bergheyck, a Flemish noble of high repute, headed and organized a widespread pro-French conspiracy. His partisans prepared themselves to deliver the great fortress towns of Belgium to the French at the first favourable opportunity. In May Marlborough had detected and nipped in the bud the plot to surrender Antwerp. He had grave reasons to be anxious about the feeling in Brussels itself. He was under no illusions about Ghent and Bruges. Indeed, he had stationed Major-General Murray in that region with a whole brigade for the express purpose of giving timely aid to any threatened garrison.

During July Count Bergheyck unfolded a design for delivering Ghent and Bruges to France. The plan was considered immediately both by the French headquarters and at Versailles. Burgundy himself resolved upon the sudden flank march across the Dender towards Ghent. Vendôme thought it too hazardous, and advised a longer détour to the south. But the young prince took the plunge. On July 4 his strong advance forces under Grimaldi, ostensibly foraging to the westward, crossed the Dender at Ninove, and moved fast on Ghent. Simultaneously a flying column under the Comte de la Motte moved from the French lines at Comines to summon Bruges. The French Grand Army broke camp at seven P.M. They marched all night and all through the day of the 5th. At three A.M. La Motte entered Bruges without opposition. At dawn the French army was crossing the Senne at Tubize. At eight in the evening, having thrown out strong detachments under Albergotti to

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BURGUNDY'S MARCH

## MARLBOROUGH

cover their right flank, they were crossing the Dender at Ninove. Here they learned that the town of Ghent had surrendered, and that the governor had agreed to yield the citadel by July 8, if not sooner relieved. This continuous march of more than thirty miles, part in heavy rain, had exhausted the army. The baggage and artillery could not cross the Dender till dawn on the 6th. They lay protected only by their rearguards.

Late on July 2 Marlborough learned that the enemy were preparing to move, and on the night of the 4th at about ten o'clock he heard that they were marching westward, having sent strong detachments forward towards the Dender. He gave immediate orders to strike the camp and stand to arms. His first concern was to reinforce the garrison of Oudenarde, and thus make sure of a bridgehead on the Scheldt. He sent the following significant instructions to Murray, whose mobile brigade was near Ghent :

CAMP AT TERBANGK

July 5, 1708

*Two in the morning*

The enemy detached yesterday in the afternoon five thousand men towards Ninove. We are told since that their whole army is marched, of which we only expect the confirmation to begin ours, all things being in readiness for it. In the meantime I desire that immediately upon receipt of this you cause Sir Thomas Prendergast to march with his regiment to Oudenarde, there to remain till further orders.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough began to move his army towards Brussels at the same hour. In the afternoon, when he was near the city, he wrote to the Secretary of State, Boyle :

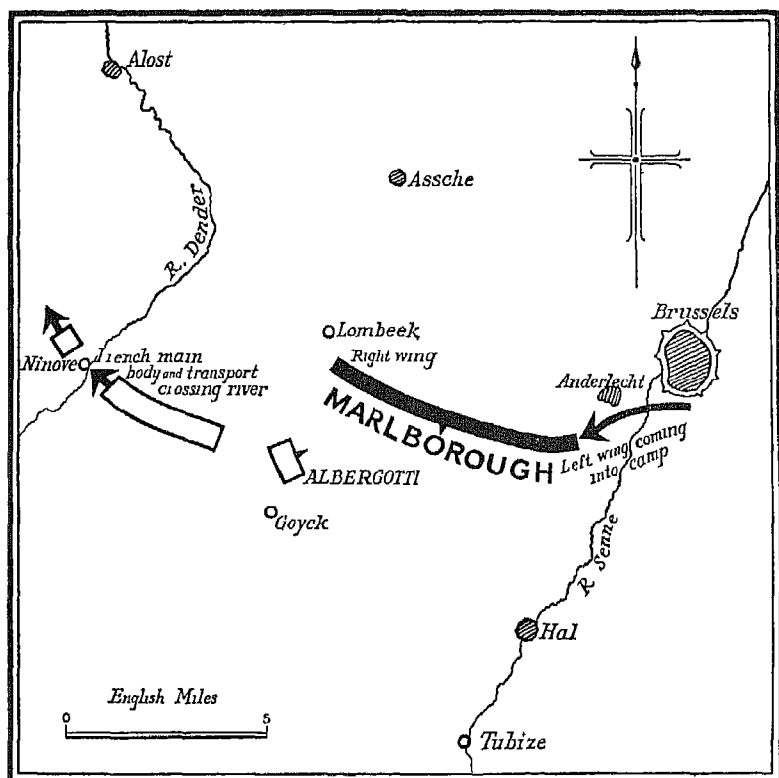
Having had advice last night that the enemy were decamped and that they had made a strong detachment some hours before under the command of M. Grimaldi, we have been upon our march since two o'clock in the morning, and, having notice at noon that the detachment was advanced as far as Alost, and had broken down the bridges over the Dender, I immediately detached two thousand horse and dragoons under the command of Major-General Bothmar, to pass at Dendermonde to observe

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, 95.

## THE SURPRISE OF GHENT AND BRUGES

them and protect the Pays de Waes. By what we can learn hitherto their army is advanced as far as Ninove, and we shall continue our march according to their further motions.<sup>1</sup>

After a march of eighteen miles the Allies came into camp about Anderlecht, on the south-western outskirts of



EVENING OF JULY 5, 1708

Brussels, during the afternoon. Their advanced troops, the right wing, lay as far west as Lombeek. We have here a picture which, although drawn by a spiteful pen, is too rare to omit. It shows us the rough side of the tapestry. Goslinga arrived at about half-past six at Marlborough's headquarters.

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, 96.

## MARLBOROUGH

We found him ready to mount his horse. He had received an hour earlier a report from the right that they were in touch with the enemy and there was a chance of striking at their rearguard. . . . It was upon this message from the generals of the right that the Duke had got up from his bed, pale and worn out and disconsolate, to go and reconnoitre for himself the situation of the enemy. We had scarcely ridden a couple of miles when he said that there was no use in going further, that it was too late to begin an operation, and thereupon he turned his horse and rode back to his quarters.<sup>1</sup>

Goslinga followed him thither, and urged an attack next morning upon the French rearguard, which must be exhausted by an extraordinary march. The Duke replied that the ground was not favourable. However, upon further reports that the whole French army was before him in position and might even itself attack at daybreak, he reinforced his right or advanced wing with thirty battalions and thirty squadrons of his weary troops, only just camped after their heavy march. "I was wakened at one in the morning," continues Goslinga,

by Milord's adjutant, who told me that the Duke was getting up to go to the right wing. I dressed forthwith and presented myself before two o'clock at his quarters. I found him at prayers. These finished, he got into his carriage. M. Dopf and I followed him. It was at the first gleam of dawn that we arrived at the mill of Tombergh [Lombeek]. We there found Bulow with other generals of the right. All were under the strong conviction . . . that we should find the enemy army in battle array ready to fall upon us. Several even in the dawn and darkness, when no objects could yet be distinguished, imagined that they counted squadrons and battalions. But at length broad daylight dissipated these phantoms, and we found not one living soul before us.<sup>2</sup>

A detachment sent in pursuit captured a French baggage column and two or three hundred prisoners, but thereafter came in contact with the infantry of the enemy's rearguard posted in hedges and enclosures, and returned with their booty to camp about noon. It was evident that the French, by a sudden and extremely daring forced march, had carried

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

## THE SURPRISE OF GHENT AND BRUGES

their whole army beyond the Dender, and that they stood between the Allies and Ghent. They were thus in a position to adopt the third alternative plan, which Marlborough had always apprehended, and to attack the allied fortresses and bridgeheads on the Scheldt and the Lys, including particularly Oudenarde and Menin.<sup>1</sup>

To give an idea of the trials of the Commander-in-Chief we must dwell a little longer on Goslinga's account. The Deputy pursued the Duke back to his headquarters. In ignorance of the measures which had been taken for its defence, he opined that Oudenarde was probably already lost. He clamoured for an immediate march south-westward in order to protect Menin and the conquered territories of Flanders. All his account is designed to portray Marlborough as a vacillating sluggard whom the Deputy was endeavouring to arouse to a sense of his duty. The correspondence which has been set out shows that Marlborough was only waiting for the arrival of Eugene's cavalry to strike his blow. In the meantime he must cover Brussels. He had been without sleep the whole night, moving the army, marching himself, and striving to measure the unknown. He was, by Goslinga's account, physically very hard pressed. Nevertheless, he endured with patience the prolonged irresponsible solicitations of the Deputy, and, remarking that "your masters would not be particularly edified if we thus abandoned our own Flanders," ordered the army to march to Assche. Here, guarding Brussels and the crossings of the Dender, he could await developments and Eugene. Goslinga did all he could to create prejudice and marshal opinion against this prudent strategy, but of its massive good sense there can be no doubt.

We have seen that on the evening of the 5th the generals of Marlborough's right wing conceived themselves in presence of the main French army and even liable to attack. It was not, however, till daylight on the 6th that all the French vehicles and cannon passed the Dender safely, followed during the morning by Albergotti and the rearguard. There is little doubt that if Albergotti had been strongly attacked about

<sup>1</sup> See map at p. 389; also where necessary the general map of the Western Netherlands facing p. 556.



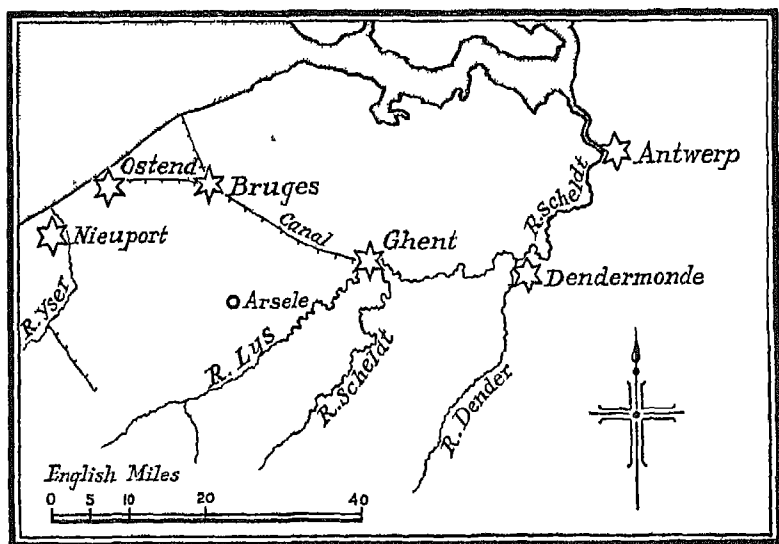
## MARLBOROUGH

four in the afternoon of the 5th Burgundy might have paid for his audacity with the loss of the whole of his artillery and baggage, as well as of his flank and rearguards. This is made a reproach against Marlborough. The question remains whether such an attack was physically possible. Marlborough could not move from Terbanck on the night of the 4th till he knew for certain which way the French main army was marching. Grimaldi's advance to Ninove might be a feint to cover a stroke in the opposite direction at Louvain, and bring about a disastrous separation of the converging allied armies. When Marlborough moved he moved as fast as the French; but the French had started ten miles nearer to the Dender and seven hours before him. He did not come in touch with their rearguard till half-past five in the afternoon. His own troops had been under arms for eighteen hours and had made a full march. His left wing had not yet arrived. Darkness must have fallen before he could attack in force. When about seven o'clock he said it was too late and turned his horse, he was unquestionably right. If, of course, he had known with certainty the day before what the French intended, if even he could have known what they were doing when they started on the evening of the 4th, a better chance would have offered itself. But Burgundy was protected by the secrecy of his plans and by the very rashness of his march.

Civilian spectators like Goslinga often perceive opportunities which are not in fact open to responsible generals moving large armies in the fog of war, and bound to provide against many dangers which as soon as they are warded off are not remembered or even noticed. Fine stories can always be told of what might have happened *if* the facts, times, and information had been different. Nor would a Deputy, driving about in his comfortable berlin, appreciate the strain upon the marching troops, or the imperative nature of their need for food and rest. It is not that these factors would be unknown to him, but rather their emphasis and values. We can, however, see from his account Marlborough's intense fatigue at this time, his despondency and grave

## THE SURPRISE OF GHENT AND BRUGES

anxiety, his unrelenting care and discharge of duty. He was ailing and about to become ill. The prolonged and varied stresses to which he was subjected—the Queen estranged, his political system tottering, the hounds upon his track at home, a superior enemy upon his front, Eugene's unavoidable delays, Goslinga's endless officious carping and chatter—had found the limits of his hitherto unconquered spirit.



FRENCH CONTROL OF THE WATERWAYS

The worst was to come. On the march to Assche the news he must inwardly have dreaded of the loss of Ghent and Bruges arrived. To Marlborough this seemed for the moment disastrous to the whole campaign. Ghent was, in Berwick's words, "the key to all the rivers and all the waterways of Flanders." It seemed to govern the movement of siege artillery. Bruges was only less important. By its loss the direct line of communication with England by Ostend was destroyed. The fruits of Ramillies could be torn away piecemeal. The climax of the new campaign seemed ruined. What wonder if the Captain-General yielded to an hour of gloom? He was only a man.

## MARLBOROUGH

Brigadier Grumbkow, the Prussian commissary at the British headquarters, wrote to Frederick I :

The blow which the enemy dealt us did not merely destroy all our plans, but was sufficient to do irreparable harm to the reputation and previous good fortune of Mylord Duke, and he felt this misfortune so keenly that I believed *he would succumb to this grief early the day before yesterday, as he was so seized by it that he was afraid of being suffocated.*<sup>1</sup>

It was in this mood that Eugene found him. They met at Assche. The Prince, escorted by a hundred Hungarian hussars, had driven on in his post-chaise four days ahead of his cavalry, and here he was fresh and gay with Cadogan at his side. Now for the first time the Army of the North saw the hero of the Empire in their midst. "Eugene had," we are told, "at first to live down the disappointing impression given by his stunted frame, his slouch, and the pock-marked cheeks which sagged in his pale face. Although thirteen years younger than Marlborough, he was called the 'old Italian Prince.' At headquarters and in the heat of the fighting, in deliberations and bold, calculated deeds, in his domination of councils of war and his irresistible power of command, he revealed his worth as a man and a soldier."<sup>2</sup>

Marlborough was overjoyed to see his heroic comrade. He was also very glad to have Cadogan back from Ostend. He had noticeably missed his Quartermaster-General and Intelligence chief during these exhausting days. He "tenderly embraced"<sup>3</sup> Eugene, saying, "I am not without hopes of congratulating your highness on a great victory ; for my troops will be animated by your presence." But this was for the public. The two shut themselves up together for some hours with their maps. No one knows what passed. Eugene was certainly surprised at Marlborough's depression. ". . . I did not remain in Brussels, but passed straight through the town to the army in order to discuss with the

<sup>1</sup> Grumbkow to Frederick I (undated, but presumably July 9, 1708) ; K. W. von Schoning, *Des General-Feldmarschalls Dubislav Gneomar von Natzmers Leben und Kriegsthaten* (1838), p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Von Noorden, iii, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Grumbkow to Frederick I ; *loc. cit.*

## THE SURPRISE OF GHENT AND BRUGES

Duke of Marlborough what is to be done. I have found him also in full march and pretty consternated [*ziemlich consterniert*].”<sup>1</sup>

Eugene’s Austrian biographer says that

the Prince was astounded to see such despondency in a general like Marlborough over a misfortune not relatively very important. They were closeted together for several hours, and Eugene succeeded in convincing the Duke that his affairs were not in anything like so bad a state as he saw them.<sup>2</sup>

Grumbkow’s account tallies with this :

While Mylord Duke was writing to the Queen, the Prince drew me aside and asked me what exactly all this meant. The Duke was incomprehensibly exhausted, and talked as though everything was lost, which the Prince did not consider appropriate, for unless he [Marlborough]<sup>3</sup> lost his life we should with God’s help obtain satisfaction.

This morning Mylord Duke had a severe fever and was so ill that he had to be bled. He is very exhausted, and I believe it would do him a great deal of good if your Majesty could write him something consoling and assure him of your continued well-wishing in spite of the losses he has suffered, leaving out of consideration that there will be opportunities for the Duke to display his gratitude.<sup>4</sup>

Natzmer, the Prussian cavalry general, says :

All Flanders was being lost, and there was deep depression in the army.

Mylord Duke was inconsolable over these sad happenings and discussed with me in touching confidence this sudden turn in events which would have become even worse for us, had the enemy exploited their advantage with persisting boldness. But our affairs improved through God’s support and Prince Eugène’s aid, whose timely arrival raised the spirits of the army again and consoled us.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eugene to the Emperor, Brussels, July 9, 1708 ; *Feldzüge*, Series II, vol. i, Suppt., p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Arneth, II, 19.

<sup>3</sup> We think this is what Eugene suggested. The alternative would be contrary to his character.

<sup>4</sup> Grumbkow to Frederick I ; *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Natzmer, p. 286.

## MARLBOROUGH

Eugene's encouragement to Marlborough at this moment is a bright feature in their comradeship. He brought a draught of new life to a hard-pressed man. But Marlborough had summoned Eugene from the Moselle for the express purpose of fighting a battle, and no other thought but procuring it was ever in his mind. It was obvious that a movement across the French communications was the effective answer to their daring march, and the best way of bringing on the long-sought decision. When "the Princes" emerged, their plans were made. Their original design of joining forces and attacking in superior strength had failed. It was resolved to rest the army at Assche for two or three days until Eugene's cavalry could reach Brussels and his infantry come into the theatre. Then they would strike south and west across the Scheldt to prevent or interrupt any siege of Oudenarde or Menin, to attack the French communications along the Belgian coast with France, and if possible to force a battle and to fight it *with Marlborough's army alone*. These clear-cut decisions were endorsed by the council of war.

There followed a three days' lull. Marlborough succeeded in throwing Chanclos, the governor of Ath, with all the troops he could collect (about seven hundred men), into Oudenarde, thus fully manning its defences. He was forced to send four infantry battalions into Brussels on account of the panic and excitement there. His pioneers were busy on the roads to the southward, and the army was preparing itself for march and battle. Eugene returned to Brussels for a private reason. There dwelt in that city an aged lady, his mother, the Comtesse de Soissons. He had survived twenty years of glory and danger since they last met. Now after a day of reunion they must part again, and on the eve of battle. By the 9th his cavalry would be near enough to the capital to make it safe, and Marlborough's army thus acquired full freedom of movement.

On the evening of the 7th Marlborough collapsed. He was forced to abandon business. His doctor advised his removal to Brussels. He refused to quit the camp, but the orders of the 8th were issued from Overkirk's tent.

## THE SURPRISE OF GHENT AND BRUGES

"His Grace," wrote Hare, "has been confined to his bed to-day by a hot fever fit, but something he took in the afternoon carried it off with a gentle sweat and he was much mended."<sup>1</sup> Cadogan, with a strong detachment, started south at dusk with pioneers to make sure of the ways. At two A.M. on Monday, the 9th, the army marched in four columns, two of infantry in the centre, with cavalry on either flank. Thirty squadrons under Albemarle covered their rear and interposed as long as possible between the enemy and Brussels. Marlborough's condition improved greatly in the night, and he was able in the morning to ride his horse in the sight of all men. "In all appearances," says Hare, "he was very well." The army reached Herfelingen, where Eugene overtook them, before eleven o'clock, having marched fifteen miles, and the Duke ordered a halt and camp to be pitched. From this place Marlborough wrote a letter to Godolphin which deserves careful attention.

July 9

. . . The treachery of Ghent, continual marching, and some letters<sup>2</sup> I have received from England have so vexed me that I was yesterday in so great a fever that the doctor would have persuaded me to have gone to Brussels; but I thank God I am now better. . . . The States have used this country so ill that I no ways doubt but all the towns in this country will play us the same trick as Ghent has done, whenever they have it in their power. I have been desired by the Deputies to write that her Majesty would be pleased to let *the troops, now in the Isle of Wight*, be sent for their relief to Ostend; so that it is likely you will be desired the same thing by M. Vriberg;<sup>3</sup> *but I hope the Queen will continue in the resolution of employing those troops as she first designed; for I think that will be much more for hers and the nation's honour; but Vriberg must not know my opinion.* . . .

Having made a halt of five hours, I am continuing my march, as I intend to do all the night, in hopes of getting to the camp of Lessines before the enemy, who made yesterday a detachment of sixteen thousand men for the investing of Oudenarde. If

<sup>1</sup> Hare Papers, H.M.C., p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> From the Queen and Sarah.

<sup>3</sup> Dutch envoy in London.

## MARLBOROUGH

I get to the camp of Lessines before them, I hope to be able to hinder the siege, being resolved to venture everything, rather than lose that place.

*Lessines the 10th*

Mr Cardonnel telling me that by a mistake the letters were not gone, I have opened mine to let you know that the head of the army is got hither. I have received advice this morning from the Governor of Oudenarde that he was invested on both sides of his town yesterday morning. I should think myself happy, since I am got into this camp, if they continue their resolution of carrying on that siege.<sup>1</sup>

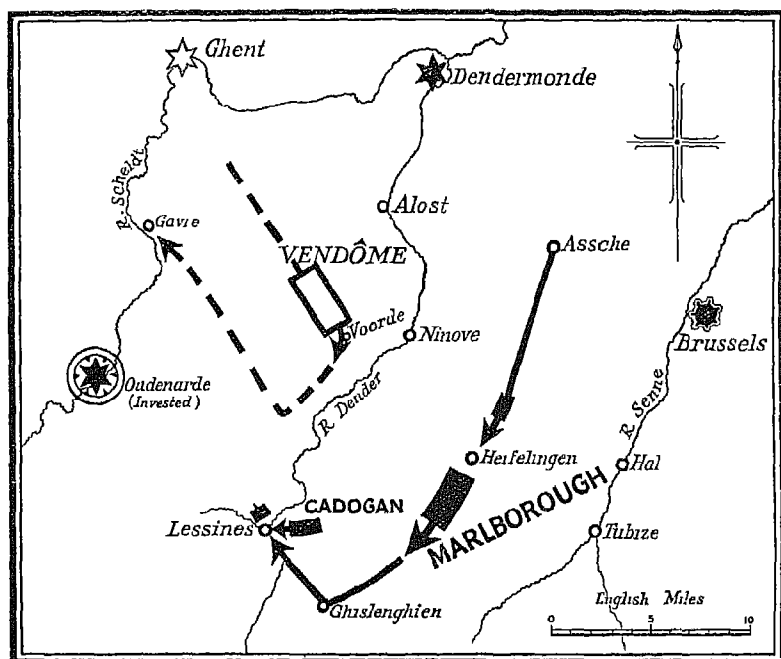
The pith of this lies in the reference to the eleven battalions of British troops, over six thousand men, who were held in the Isle of Wight under General Erle ready with shipping for the "descent" upon the French coast. Marlborough's request that the Deputies' advice should be ignored, and that the force should be held suspended, reveals his far-reaching thought. He looked across the impending great battle, with all its chances, to the exploitation of victory. Later on we shall see the form which he wished that exploitation to take.

Meanwhile the French had not been able to make any use of their leisure since the 6th. They had received the surrender of the citadel of Ghent, they had rested their army, they still lay in the angle of the Scheldt, and obviously believed themselves to have the advantage. After sharp discussions it was decided to besiege Oudenarde rather than Menin, to attack it only from the western bank of the Scheldt, and to cover the siege from a strong position at Lessines. The investment of Oudenarde began early on July 9. About three o'clock it was learned that the Allies had camped at Herfelingen. This seemed to the French command to portend a movement on Namur or Charleroi. For precaution they decided to move at once upon Lessines. By midnight their vanguard had reached Voorde, ten miles short of it. But at four o'clock on the afternoon of the 9th Cadogan, with eight battalions and eight squadrons,

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 133-134.

## THE SURPRISE OF GHENT AND BRUGES

had set off quietly from the camp at Herfelingen, and by midnight eight hundred of his men had actually crossed the Dender and occupied Lessines. By four in the morning the rest of Cadogan's forces had come up. They spent the night building bridges for the army and establishing themselves



THE MAIN ARMIES (JULY 10, 1708)

in the naturally strong Lessines camp. Marlborough moved throughout the night with the whole army, and after a short halt at Ghislenghien his head reached the Dender at Lessines at eleven A.M. on the 10th, having marched in extremely good order over thirty miles in thirty-three hours. All day long his columns were crossing the bridges and closing up. In the early morning from Cadogan's outposts he saw with pleasure the steel flashes of the French troops still on the heights before Voorde. The corner was turned and the Dender passed.



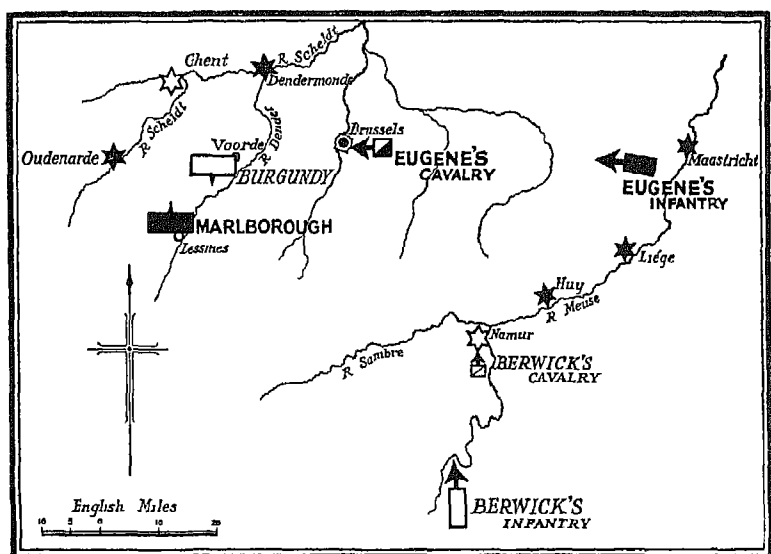
## MARLBOROUGH

Finding themselves forestalled at Lessines, the French held a council of war. They could, of course, have marched to the attack, in which case the battle would have been fought a day earlier and upon the Dender instead of the Scheldt, with the difference that Cadogan already occupied a strong position, and the allied main army was deployed or close at hand. But neither Burgundy nor Vendôme, although numerically stronger, was thinking of an offensive battle. They were constrained to raise the siege of Oudenarde. The investing cavalry was ordered to return, and their great army of over a hundred thousand men turned right-handed, withdrew northward by an easy march, and lay for the night near the crossings of the Scheldt which they were preparing at Gavre. Their general intention was to hold the line of the Scheldt, and establish a thoroughly secure communication with Lille, and eventually with Berwick's army. Their sense of security was enhanced by the fact that Marlborough had left some of his tents standing at Ghislenghien. They had no idea that his main body was already at Lessines. None of the experienced French commanders expected a serious event. They might wrangle about future action, but all thought themselves in control of the situation.

Certainly many choices lay open to them. The normal position of the great armies was reversed. The French looked towards France, the Allies towards Holland. Each might threaten the communications of the other. Each could count upon powerful reinforcements. Eugene's cavalry had reached the outskirts of Brussels. Berwick's advance guard was already at Namur. Whichever side could combine its whole force first would enjoy for some days a decisive superiority. Burgundy's stroke on Ghent and Bruges had been crowned by substantial and sensational success. The price of the long French marches to the north and west was, however, that Marlborough and Eugene could now certainly join forces a week before Burgundy could be strengthened by Berwick. In fact, the armies of Marlborough and Eugene were already in strategic relation, while the recent French movements had left Berwick on the balance

## THE SURPRISE OF GHENT AND BRUGES

six marches farther from the decisive scene. The realization of this potent fact explains the hesitancy of the French behaviour. They wanted to guard their stolen prizes in the north; but vital safety enjoined them to come nearer to Lille and to Berwick's approaching army. This they thought easy to achieve from their central position in the angle of the rivers. They held the chord, while the Allies



THE GENERAL SITUATION (JULY 10, 1708)

to forestall them must move around an arc three times as long. It was therefore with complacency that they lay on the night of the 10th within a few miles of the Scheldt, over which their bridges were a-building. Even if Marlborough's advance troops were holding Lessines, they had plenty of time to blockade the bridgehead of Oudenarde from the west and thus put themselves behind a secure river line and within two marches of Lille.

But they had no idea of the astonishing speed with which Marlborough's army was moving.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

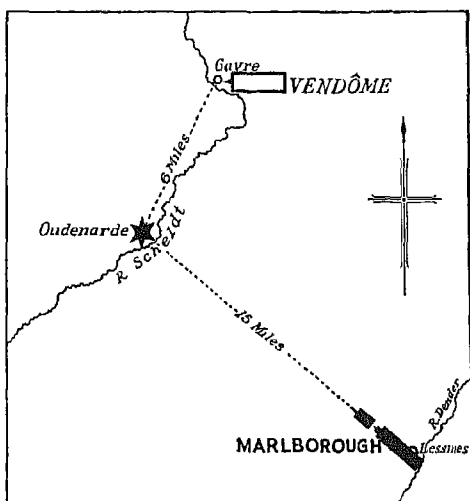
1708,  
July 11 AS the campaign of 1708 opened new conceptions of the art of war, so its decisive battle was quite different in character from any previously fought. Apart from the primitive types of firearms and the slow movements of the artillery, Oudenarde was a twentieth-century battle. The chance encounter by forces of unknown strength, the gradual piecemeal broadening of the fighting front, the increasing stake engaged willy-nilly by both sides, the looseness and flexibility of all the formations, the improvised and wide-ranging manœuvres, and, above all, the encircling movement of the Allies, foreshadowing Tannenberg, present us with a specimen of modern war which has no fellow in the rest of the eighteenth century. This was no set piece of parade and order. The troops fought as they came up on the unknown ground where they collided. There was no fixed plan nor formal array. Opportunism and a hardy pugnacity led the victors. The French High Command never understood what was happening till they realized they had sustained a most grievous defeat. And thereafter, also in accordance with modern practice, they lied zealously to prove that nothing had happened. Yet the day at Oudenarde reversed the fortune of war, upset the odds, and dominated the whole campaign.

When the Allies sank into their bivouacs about Lessines, as they arrived during July 10, the soldiers scented battle in the air. Men deserted their duties as escorts of the baggage wagons in order stealthily to take their places in the fighting ranks. "It was expected," wrote Private Deane, whose regiment of Foot Guards so often guarded Marlborough's headquarters, "y<sup>e</sup> Duke's quarters would have been att Gillingen [Ghislinghien], but his grace being carefull lay in

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

ye feild w<sup>th</sup> ye Army that night.”<sup>1</sup> Recording the long marches, he says, “And all for to force them to a battle, although on great unequallety, they being 21 Batallions of Foot and 24 Squadrons of Horse more than we att this juncture.”

At one A.M. on the 11th Cadogan set off along the Oudenarde road with sixteen battalions, eight squadrons, strong detachments of pioneers, thirty-two guns, and the whole of the pontoon train. Although Marlborough's rear had hardly crossed the Dender before dark on the 10th, he marched after Cadogan with the whole army at seven. Goslinga, judging backwards, snarls at Marlborough for not starting even earlier. Those who ride in carriages have their own point of view.



SITUATION, DAYBREAK JULY 10

Eugene's diary, on the contrary, says, "The army could not follow until the roads had been repaired."<sup>2</sup> This seems conclusive; but we must remember also what the troops had done and what they had to do. The rank and file must stand to arms for a considerable time before the columns can move. "We marcht at dawn," said Private Deane, and that no doubt was how it seemed to him. In fact, not a moment was lost in this surprising march.

This was the greatest day in Cadogan's splendid military career. It was nine o'clock when he reached the high ground overlooking the Scheldt below Oudenarde. His scouts

<sup>1</sup> Deane, *Journal*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Werwicq, July 18; *Feldzüge*, Series II, i, Suppt., 154.

## MARLBOROUGH

could see that the great masses of the French army six miles away were still east of the Scheldt. He instantly sent this all-important news back to Marlborough, and proceeded with his engineers to pick the sites of the bridges. At 10.30, while his infantry columns were closing up, his pontoons arrived, and the throwing of five bridges began.<sup>1</sup> There were also two stone bridges inside the fortress of Oudenarde. These were supplemented by two temporary bridges in order that if necessary the whole of the Dutch, who formed the rear and left wing of the army, could cross thereby. In all, nine bridges for eighty thousand men.

Meanwhile the French, in complete ignorance of these activities, had begun to cross the Scheldt in a leisurely fashion. Lieutenant-General Biron, a nobleman of the highest repute, had been ordered to command the advance- or flank-guard of twenty squadrons and seven Swiss battalions. He was delayed for some time because the French bridges were still unfinished ; but during the morning he made his way into the plains beyond, occupied the village of Heurne with his infantry, four battalions of which, apparently in error, moved on a mile farther to the village of Eyne. He remained himself with his cavalry astride of the Ghent road, and his foraging parties scattered themselves about the peaceful fields.<sup>2</sup>

As soon as Cadogan's news reached Marlborough at about ten he advanced, with Prince Eugene, at the head of the cavalry of the right wing as fast as possible to the river. Indeed, the two generals, with twenty squadrons of the Prussian horse, made a large part of the way at the gallop. Natzmer, their general, says :

On the march we received the cheerful news that Cadogan had thrown bridges over the Scheldt at Eename, near Oudenarde, without any resistance, and also that the enemy, coming up from Alost, were planning to cross the river at Gavre.

This news filled us with joy and in our eagerness we sought out my Lord Duke to allow us to advance at a faster pace.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eugene's "Diarium," dated Werwicq, July 18 ; *Feldzüge*, Series II, i, Suppt., 154.

<sup>2</sup> See general map of the battle of Oudenarde, facing p. 432.      <sup>3</sup> Natzmer, p. 288.

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

Marlborough disposed the whole cavalry of the left wing as a flank guard to the northward in case the French should advance against him instead of crossing. He ordered the whole army to press on with the utmost diligence. The troops were told that they could surely pass the river before the French. This aroused an intense excitement among all ranks. Forgetting the fatigues of their tremendous marches, the infantry columns strode out manfully. Many intelligent men and veteran soldiers in every rank understood what was at stake. They were also deeply angered by what they considered the treacherous filching from them of Ghent and Bruges. Their exertions were wonderful. "It was no longer a march," says Goslinga, "but a run." A fierce enthusiasm, noted by all observers, and most unusual in those times, inspired the private soldiers. The strictest orders had been given against the baggage of high personages being intermingled with the troops. Such breaches as occurred were punished out of hand. The soldiers hurled the wagons from the track, scattering or pillaging the contents, and overtook their marching comrades with hoarse cries of satisfaction. Never was a battle more consciously fought by the rank and file. Trust in Marlborough, admiration for Eugene, and hatred for the enemy filled their sturdy hearts. "Towards 12 o'clock [actually 12.30] the head of our cavalry of the right wing reached the bridges and crossed by the pontoons at a brisk trot; but the infantry took longer to move and it was several hours later that they began to cross."<sup>1</sup>

Cadogan's bridges had been completed shortly before noon, and all his troops assembled near them. Leaving four battalions to guard the passage, he crossed the river with the other twelve, and, with his eight squadrons under Rantzau, the general in command of the Hanoverian cavalry, guarding his left, moved cautiously towards the village of Eyne. Rantzau's patrols almost immediately brushed into Biron's foragers. Shots were fired, and some foragers were captured. Others carried the alarm to the rear. Biron thereupon advanced sharply with twelve squadrons, and Rantzau fell back behind the left of Cadogan's infantry, now in line and approaching the

<sup>1</sup> Eugene's "Diarium"; *loc. cit.*

## MARLBOROUGH

Diepenbeck rivulet and the village of Eyne. Biron, advancing under the belief that he had only a raiding party in front of him, suddenly saw a little after one o'clock a considerable force of hostile infantry already deployed for action. Conspicuous among these was a brigade of redcoats. The presence of allied infantry in such a place at this time was most surprising to the French generals. They were nearly seventeen miles beyond Lessines, where the allied vanguard had been reported the previous evening. But much more broke upon him. Advancing to the windmill of Eyne, he saw the bridges and the battalions guarding them. He saw an endless column of cavalry streaming down the hillside above Eename, crossing the bridges at a trot, and swiftly forming on the near bank. Above all, on the opposite uplands he saw the dust-clouds of an approaching army. Evidently something very serious and totally unexpected by the French command was in progress. He sent a succession of messengers spurring back to the French headquarters as these successive apparitions confronted him.

His aide-de-camp found Vendôme and the royal princes already over the river, dismounted and lunching by the roadside. Vendôme at first refused to believe the news. He thought it incredible that strong enemy forces, especially of foot, could have crossed or even reached the Scheldt at this hour, still less that the allied generals would attempt to carry any large proportion of their troops across the Scheldt within such close striking distance of the whole French army. A study of the distances on the map will show that there were solid reasons for this opinion. After all, it was but two days since Marlborough had been located at Assche, nearly fifty miles away. But successive messengers amplified Biron's facts, and it is with facts that soldiers have to deal. The Marshal, whose temper had been rising under the pressure of unwelcome news, at length got up furiously from the improvised table and mounted his horse. "If they are there," he exclaimed, "the devil must have carried them. Such marching is impossible!" But when he looked across the rolling plain to the southward he too saw the dust-clouds



#### TAPESTRY OF THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

The tapestry illustrates Eugene receiving the command of the right wing of the army from Marlborough, but the background of the general characteristics of the battle of Oudenarde does not represent the hour and place of the incident.

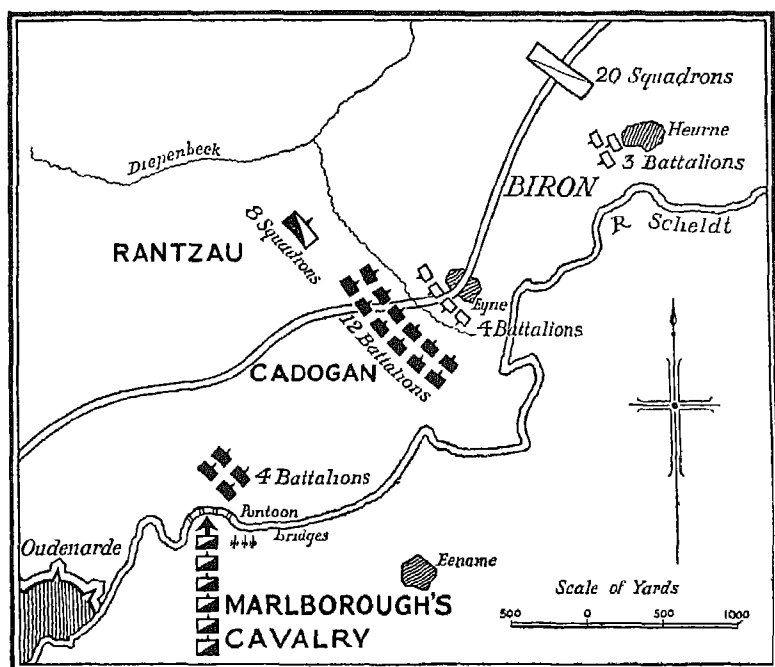
*By permission of the Duke of Marlborough. Photograph by permission of the*  
*V. & A. M.*





## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

from Marlborough's marching columns. These showed the heads of the allied main body only a mile or two from the bridges. So far, however, it seemed that only their vanguard had crossed. He sent Biron's aide-de-camp back with an order to attack at once, adding that he would come himself and support him with ample forces. Telling the princes to



BIRON'S DISCOVERY

follow gently with the main body now across the river and close at hand, he rode in no great haste to the head of the leading columns, composed of the cavalry of the right wing, and turned them in Biron's direction.

There was much dispute among the French after the battle about the hour when Vendôme first realized that the Allies were crossing the river in force. Vendôme declares, and his secretary, Alberoni, in the letter which Saint-Simon analyses so scathingly,<sup>1</sup> pretends absurdly, that it was as early as ten

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon, vi, 70-86.

## MARLBOROUGH

o'clock ; that Vendôme wished immediately to attack ; but that Burgundy would not move till four in the afternoon ; and then only when Vendôme deemed it too late. Saint-Simon, on the contrary, declares with a wealth of argument that it was two in the afternoon before Vendôme understood what was happening. There can be no doubt that Alberoni's letter is a tissue of lies. It must have been at least half-past one before Biron's third aide-de-camp aroused Vendôme to his danger. By that time Marlborough and Eugene had crossed in person with the Prussian horse, and the Duke himself was posting a six-gun battery on Cadogan's left behind the village of Schaerken.<sup>1</sup>

When Biron received Vendôme's order he was hardly in a position to execute it. The hostile front had broadened ; it now extended almost to Schaerken village, behind which the battery of cannon was now visible. It was protected by the marshy rivulet of the Diepenbeck. The enclosures and hedges behind Eyne and about Schaerken were lined with enemy infantry. Their strength across the river was increasing every moment, and large bodies of cavalry were now formed on the slopes above Bevere. Biron did not know the ground, and was evidently outnumbered. While in these circumstances he was reflecting how to obey the orders he had received, Puységur, a Lieutenant-General of high reputation, afterwards well known as a writer on military subjects, arrived to lay out the camp. Puységur warned him that the ground in his front was impassable. Marshal Matignon, another of the principal staff officers of the army, who had ridden up and heard this discussion, thereupon forbade Biron to charge, and assumed responsibility for so doing.

After another quarter of an hour Vendôme was seen approaching along the Ghent road at the head of considerable forces of horse and foot. He asked why Biron had not attacked as ordered. Puységur intervened. He declared

<sup>1</sup> This was almost the only allied artillery which fought in the battle. The bridges must have been so continuously blocked with troops, or the pressure upon the commanders so great, that not even the rest of Cadogan's thirty-two guns found their place at the crossing, and the remainder of the artillery was outstripped by the infantry and the event.

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

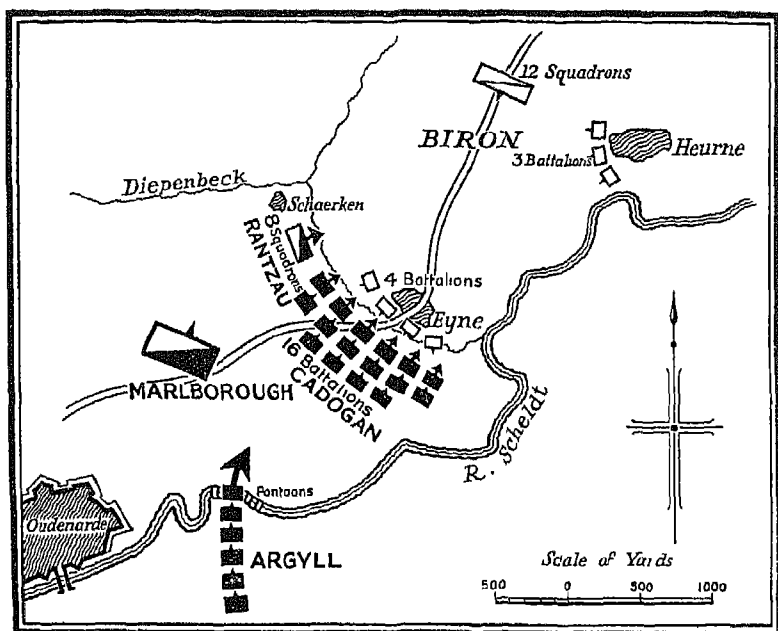
that a morass lay between them and the enemy, and as he was supposed to have unique personal knowledge of the ground his judgment prevailed. Vendôme, still more angry, submitted. He withdrew his reinforcement west of the Ghent road, leaving Biron's seven battalions in Eyne and Heurne unsupported.

While this was passing Burgundy, "following gently" at the head of the main body of the army, began to descend the slopes towards the Norken stream; and, seeing that no action was in progress, and that Vendôme's squadrons were halted or moving westward, he and his advisers decided not to cross the Norken, but to draw up the army in order of battle along the high ground behind it with the centre about Huysse. This was accordingly done. In the circumstances, with no special instructions and having regard to the ponderous masses moving steadily behind him, this seems to have been a prudent measure. It must have been half-past three before the movement was completed. Vendôme, who was certainly no more than a mile away, does not seem to have made any attempt to prevent this deflection of the army. It was, however, essentially a refusal of battle, and inconsistent with any idea of driving the allied vanguard into the Scheldt. Moreover, it left Biron's seven battalions, particularly the four in Eyne, most perilously detached and exposed to Cadogan's assault.

It was a quarter to three. Although the Allies were morally they were not yet physically committed to the hazardous operation of crossing the deep, broad river, and forming on the other bank in the face of a superior enemy. There was still time to withdraw Cadogan. But the moment of final choice had come. Argyll and the leading corps, including all the British infantry, had reached the bridges. The hesitating movements of the French, their unaccountable delays, their deployment behind the Norken, confirmed Marlborough's resolve. With Eugene at his side in resolute accord, he allowed his dusty, ardent redcoats to trample across the pontoons. At this moment, when the main action was about to begin, these infantry had marched over fifty

## MARLBOROUGH

miles in sixty hours. For the Allies the die was cast ; but even now the French could refuse battle. If they were content to let Marlborough dominate the region between the Scheldt and the Lys, and themselves to stand where they were to cover Ghent, no general attack could be made upon



CADOGAN'S ATTACK, 3 P.M.

them that day. But their great opponents were playing confidently and high.

No record exists of any order sent to Cadogan ; but it is certain that he acted in the very closest concert with his chief. The Swiss battalions in Eyne had been for some time at his mercy. All his preparations were complete. He had filled in the Diepenbeck at numerous points with fascines. He now called up his fourth brigade, no longer needed at the bridgehead, and at three p.m., with his whole force of sixteen battalions and Rantzau's cavalry guarding his left, advanced to storm the village of Eyne.

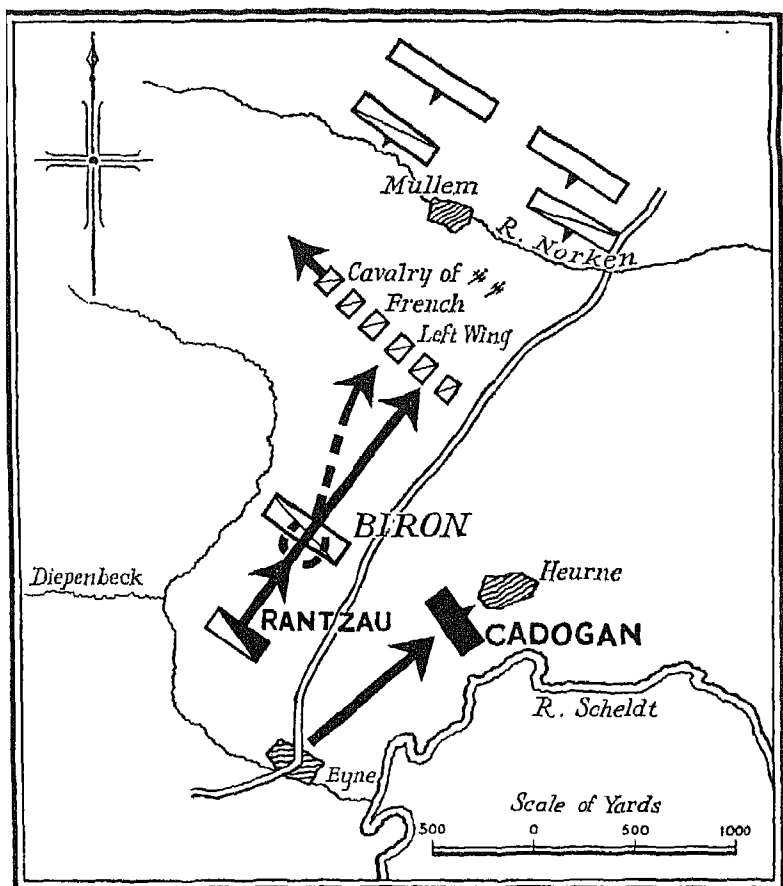
## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

Sabine's British brigade was in the centre opposite the village. In perfect order, with shouldered arms, they moved slowly forward without firing a shot; nor did they bring their bayonets to the charge until they were within twenty yards of the Swiss who lined the enclosures. There was a roar of musketry, and the battle of Oudenarde began. The Swiss brigade, feeling themselves forgotten or abandoned by the French army, now nearly three miles away, left alone far from any help, made practically no resistance. Three battalions out of four surrendered at once. The fourth sought to retreat along the road to Heurne. But Rantzau's squadrons, circling around the western outskirts of the village, rode in upon them, broke them up, and cut them down. At this grisly spectacle the three battalions in Heurne, who had advanced some distance to support their comrades, fled in disorder beyond the Norken.

Rantzau now saw before him in the open plain Biron's twelve French squadrons. With him was the young Electoral Prince, the future King George II, and a group of daring notables. Rantzau charged the twelve French squadrons. These good troops, oppressed by the destruction of the Swiss, feeling no firm grip behind them to counter the aggressive will-power of the enemy, were broken and scattered by the Hanoverian charge. They all fled towards the main French army. The cavalry of its left wing, or rear-guard, was slowly defiling across the front to take their positions in the battle array drawing up beyond the Norken. Into their left flank suddenly drove a disorderly crowd of fugitives, and behind them Rantzau and his eight squadrons still in hand and in good order. In hot blood no doubt, but as a definite military decision, Rantzau charged into the whole cavalry of the French left wing. There was a wild confusion. Prince George's horse was shot. The squadron commander with whom he rode, Colonel Loseke, gave him his own, and was himself killed as he helped the Prince to remount. Many French squadrons, unable under the impact to wheel left into line, were thrown into disorder. Numbers speedily prevailed. A French battery between Mullem and

## MARLBOROUGH

the Ghent road came into action. A dozen squadrons advanced at the gallop. Nevertheless Rantzau got out of the *mêlée* with surprisingly small loss, carrying with him a



RANTZAU'S CHARGE

mortally wounded colonel, numerous officer prisoners, ten standards, kettle-drums, and horses.

This audacious and affronting exploit, much of which was plainly visible to the proud army of France, brought on the general battle. It was an insult not to be borne. Those who had previously favoured caution now clamoured for revenge.

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

The mood was valiant, but the hour was late, the ground unstudied, the plan unformed, and the leadership divided.

All the while the allied deployment across the river was proceeding. Natzmer with his twenty squadrons had already passed the bridges. They met "heaps" (*haufen*) of prisoners coming back from Cadogan's attack. "Cadogan himself," says Natzmer,

came to me in great joy at our arrival and at my coming up in his support. I traversed the village of Eyne, where the fighting had just ended, and formed beyond it. Soon afterwards Prince Eugene came and accosted me, "*Je vous trouve bien avancé*" [You are pretty far ahead]. He then sprang forward to examine himself the enemy's position. In a little while he returned in great spirits, and exclaimed, "*Il faut que nous en ayons poil ou aile*" [We have got to get 'em skin or wing].<sup>1</sup>

At four o'clock the French, more from impulse than design, began to advance from behind the Norken to the attack. Burgundy sent sixteen squadrons under Grimaldi to reconnoitre the approaches to Cadogan's left. This movement, if the prelude to a general attack, was most dangerous to the Allies. Fortunately the ground west of Groenewald and Schaerken was difficult and broken. Farms and enclosures, small woods, avenues of poplars, and above all three rivulets, of which the chief was the Diepenbeck, with their surrounding thickets and boggy patches, arrested Grimaldi. Marlborough, riding through Heurne with the Prussian horse, drew them out in the open plain beyond in order to afford some protection to Cadogan's right. Two of Cadogan's four Prussian battalions, drawn from the bridges, were already lining the hedges about Groenewald along the rivulet towards Schaerken. Sabine's British brigade was marching to extend his left. Grimaldi reported that the ground was unfit for cavalry, and was held in strength, and that infantry alone would serve. He withdrew towards the mill of Royegem. From the ladder-ways of this large structure, which itself stands on a small eminence, a fair view of the country towards Oudenarde is offered. Here Burgundy

<sup>1</sup> Natzmer, p. 289.



## MARLBOROUGH

and his younger brother, Berri, and the Pretender, the Chevalier de St George, gathered with their staffs and suites.

Practically the whole of the French infantry of the right wing had now crossed successively the Norken and the road from Royegem to Oycke, and were now entering the entangled country on a broad front. This formidable movement was necessarily slow, but at present there were no troops to resist it. Unless it could be stopped it would be fatal. Burgundy ordered six battalions to drive the Prussians from Groenewald. A fierce fire-fight at close quarters along the hedgerows began. The Prussians made good their defence against heavy odds. The six French battalions recoiled in some disorder. The loud, increasing fusillade drew Vendôme to the spot. He would better have discharged his duties as a commander had he joined the princes on the steps of Royegem mill. Instead he plunged into the local conflict. He rallied the six battalions; he brought up another six, drawn from the French centre, along the road from Mullem, and ordered a renewed attack.

All Cadogan's sixteen battalions were now in line about Groenewald and behind the rivulet towards Schaerken. Cadogan found time before the second attack to occupy the avenues leading to Herlegem, even to seize that hamlet. When Vendôme's troops came forward again they found themselves unexpectedly galled and delayed by the flanking fire from this advanced position. After a fierce encounter they were again repulsed. Marshal Vendôme was now in a fighting frenzy. The violence of his nature, which so often cowed or quelled his equals and superiors, determined him to have Groenewald whatever the cost. He drew lavishly for that purpose upon the French centre. Brigade after brigade was hurried forward, arriving breathless. Many battalions were even sent into the fire- and bayonet-fight as they arrived in column. A very heavy mass of troops was crowded upon Cadogan's front. He was outnumbered and hard pressed. His men fought with devoted courage, helped by the congestion of the enemy and the broken ground, to every feature of which they clung tenaciously.

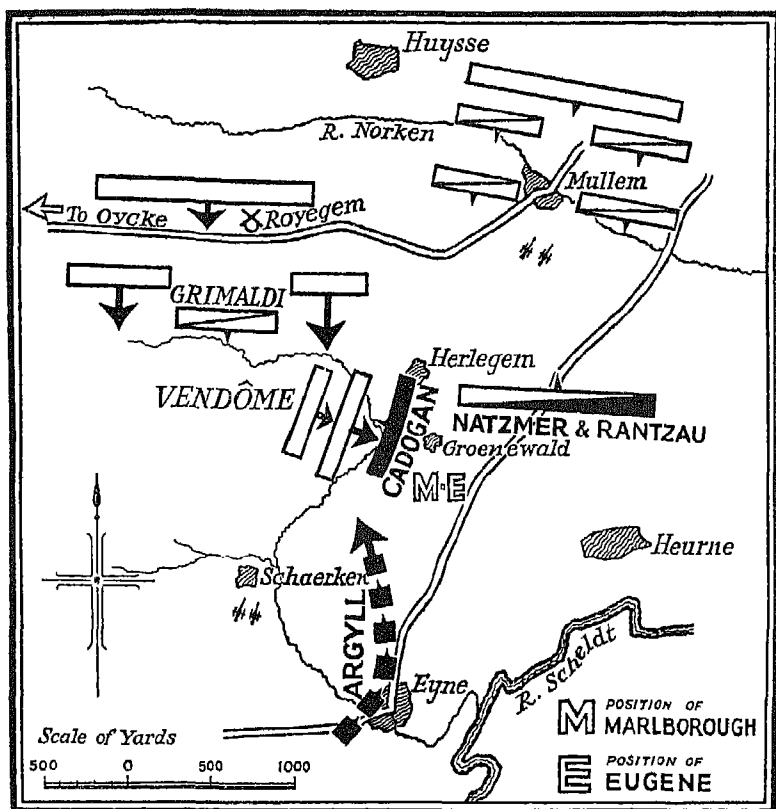


COLONEL WILLIAM CADOGAN  
*By permission of the Hon Edward Cadogan, C B.*



## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

At five o'clock Vendôme sent orders to Burgundy to bring the whole of the left wing into action by attacking to the east of Groenewald and across the Ghent road. Here, where Marlborough had posted them, stood Natzmer's twenty



OUDENARDE, 5 P.M.

squadrons of Prussian horse and Rantzau's eight squadrons, reorganizing after their charge. That was all. Not a single infantry battalion was available. The ground thereabouts was favourable for cavalry, but cavalry alone could not have withstood very long the thirty thousand men—horse, foot, and artillery—constituting the French left wing.

Vendôme's order reached Burgundy at the mill a few

## MARLBOROUGH

minutes after five. The Prince was assured by his staff and Puységur that the ground was obstructed by a morass. He therefore did not endorse or pass on Vendôme's order. He sent Captain Jenet, an aide-de-camp who had brought it, back to Vendôme to explain the reason. Jenet was killed before delivering his message by the heavy fire under which the Marshal stood. In consequence Vendôme did not know that the French left would not co-operate in the renewed attack he was about to make upon Cadogan. Had he known that his order was countermanded and the reason he could in a few minutes have reassured Burgundy about the ground, for, as Vendôme stridently repeated ever afterwards, he had himself ridden over it with considerable forces only two hours before.

We must regard the paralysis of the French left wing at this moment as most fortunate for the Allies. No one can pretend to measure what would have happened had Cadogan been driven, as he surely would have been, back upon Eyne by the concerted onslaught of overwhelming numbers. But ill-luck does not exculpate Vendôme. He should not have indulged himself by entering the local fight around Groene-wald unless he could keep a sense of proportion and a comprehensive grip of his great army. Half an hour later it was apparent that the left wing was still motionless ; but by that time he was fighting with a pike, like a private soldier rather than a marshal of France charged with the supreme control of ninety thousand men.

Another mortal danger confronted the heroic Cadogan. Overweighted in front, his right flank in the condition we have described, he was now momentarily being overlapped and turned on his left by the advance of the French right wing. This alone rendered his situation desperate. But help was at hand. The Duke of Argyll, with twenty battalions of British infantry, advancing in perfect order, now came into line on his left, and met foursquare the masses of French infantry, who assaulted along the whole front from Herlegem to Schaerken.

The first main shock of the battle now began. Along

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

the rivulet upon a mile of front Cadogan and Argyll, with twenty British and sixteen German battalions and the single battery which Marlborough had posted, fought nearly fifty battalions of the French right and centre. The intensity of the musketry fire was said to have surpassed all previous experience. The troops repeatedly fought hand to hand. Each side advanced and recoiled several times in the struggle, and every battalion had its own tale to tell.

Marlborough and Eugene remained together between Groenewald and the Ghent road. They were in equal anxiety both for their right and their left. But the immediate peril was on the left. All the bridges were now disgorging infantry in great numbers. Lottum's corps of twenty battalions was already close at hand, fully formed in line, and as the weight and breadth of the French right wing began to lap round Argyll's left, this powerful reinforcement advanced in its turn to meet the extending attack. Cadogan's action had long been flaring. Argyll was in deadly grip. The inn at Schaerken was captured by the French about 5.30, and the enemy were everywhere across the Diepenbeck. Here they were within a mile of the pontoons. Lottum became heavily engaged at 5.45, and by six o'clock his counter-attack drove the French back over the Diepenbeck and recovered Schaerken. To and fro swayed the struggle. Always the French brought up superior numbers and reached round the allied left. Always Marlborough's infantry poured across the bridges and advanced to make new head against them.

Hitherto Eugene had sat by Marlborough's side discharging, as was said, the functions of a counsellor, staff officer, and aide-de-camp. The critical situation in the centre and on the left required Marlborough's immediate personal control. Lottum's fight was hanging in the balance. But there was another reason which made Marlborough's presence at the other end of the battlefield indispensable. Overkirk, with the flower of the Dutch army, all their national troops, horse and foot, was now crossing by the Oudenarde bridges. This force of nearly twenty-five thousand men seemed likely

## MARLBOROUGH

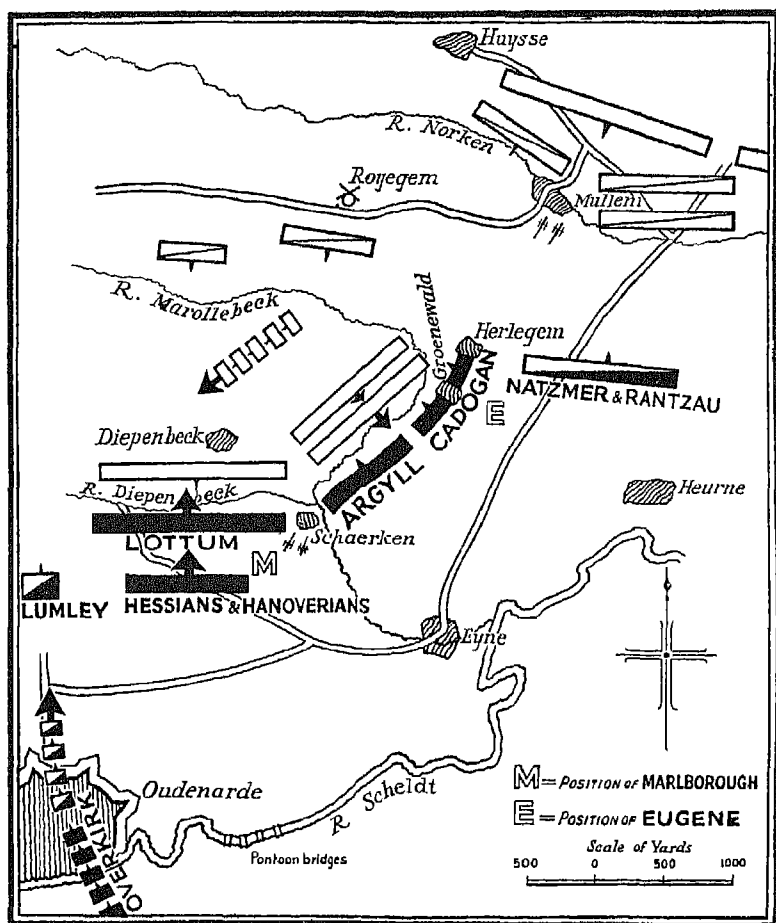
to come into action exactly where and when they were most needed. They could deliver the decisive stroke of the battle. The fighting front was now developing fast in both directions. Marlborough wished to be on the spot to concert Overkirk's entry into the field. On the other hand, his main preoccupation was still the attack which he must expect at any moment from the French left wing, whose great intact masses of cavalry and infantry could plainly be seen a mile away beyond the Norken. There was a crisis at each end of the line. The "two bodies with one soul" must now separate. At six o'clock, therefore, Marlborough placed Eugene in command of the whole right of the battle-front, including Cadogan and Argyll, Natzmer's twenty squadrons of Prussian and German horse, and Rantzau's Hanoverians. Eugene henceforward conducted the main action and commanded all the British troops. Marlborough galloped to the centre of Lottum's front, and concerned himself with this, and with bringing Overkirk and the allied left wing into action.

Overkirk, with the whole of the Dutch horse and foot, was engaged in crossing by the two stone bridges through the town of Oudenarde, and it was evident that if he could debouch in time he would reverse the position in this quarter of the field, and turn the French right decisively. But Marlborough still feared that Eugene would not be able to support an attack by the French left. Lottum's successful entry into the action and his advance had given a precious breathing-space. A new corps of eighteen Hanoverian and Hessian battalions was already in line behind Lottum.

We now witness one of those intricate manœuvres in the height of action of which Marlborough's battles afford several notable examples. There is no evidence that Eugene asked for further help. There is undoubted proof that he needed it. Vendôme's third attack was actually at its height. At 6.15 he drove Cadogan from both Herlegem and Groenewald. Eugene was at full strain. His comrade felt his burden as if it were his own. At this very moment, therefore, Marlborough brought up the eighteen Hanoverian

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

and Hessian battalions as if to reinforce Lottum's attack, and then ordered Lottum to withdraw through the intervals of these fresh battalions, and march to the right to strengthen



OUDENARDE, 6 P.M.

Prince Eugene. We remember how in the crisis of Blenheim Eugene instantly parted with his one remaining cuirassier brigade at Marlborough's call. Now Marlborough repaid this glorious debt. There was, indeed, also a high economy of force in the manœuvre. Lottum's troops, which had been



## MARLBOROUGH

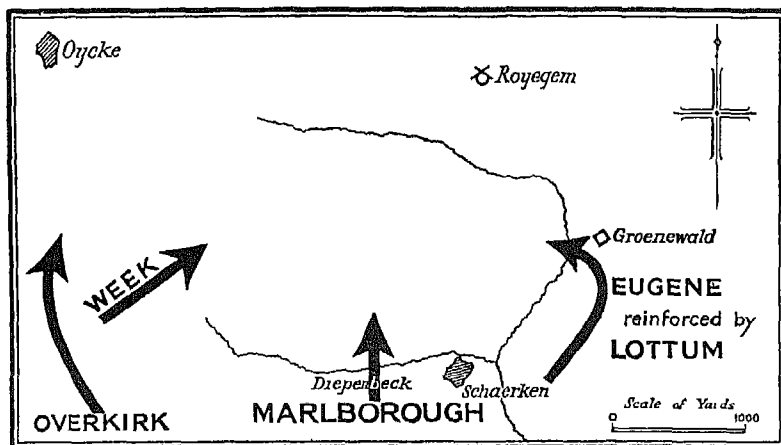
fighting heavily, would now march to the right, and be out of the fire for a space before they came again into action. The Hanoverians and Hessians, who had marched so far and fast but not yet fought, would come for the first time into action. The presence of both these forces simultaneously in Marlborough's array gave the enemy the impression of double weight on this sector. Discipline and drill enabled this complicated evolution to be executed with precision under Marlborough's eye. It took Lottum over twenty minutes after coming out of the line to reach Eugene on the right flank a mile away. The arrival of his twenty battalions stemmed the adverse tide. At this moment, therefore, Marlborough had placed Eugene in command of fifty-six engaged battalions, while keeping only eighteen under his own hand for the hard fight on his immediate front. Of this, while waiting for Overkirk, he now assumed personal direction.

At six o'clock Overkirk's intervention in force had seemed imminent. There were still two and a half hours of daylight, and Marlborough might feel, as he did before the final charge at Blenheim, that very great results lay surely within his grasp. On the Danube he had broken the hostile centre. On the Scheldt he could roll the French up from their right flank. But now a misfortune fell upon him. The supplementary bridges in Oudenarde, for some reason not explained to us, broke down, and the two narrow stone bridges could not secure the passage of Overkirk's great force at the rate expected. Overkirk, with most of his cavalry, was already by 6.15 upon the slopes of Mooregem. There was grievous congestion in the fortress, and the delivery of the infantry into the plain behind Mooregem was delayed for at least an hour. Marlborough found himself hard pressed and overlapped in his turn. It was necessary to attack with the first troops available, and Overkirk received orders to do so at 6.45 P.M.

A high control of the battle is evident at this moment. For the first time the whole allied fighting front advanced together. Overkirk sent his two leading infantry brigades under General Week through a gap in the woodlands to

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

strengthen Marlborough's left. Marlborough with his eighteen battalions drove the French across the brook as far as Diepenbeek village. On Eugene's front Lottum arrived with his twenty battalions in the nick of time, and the French were driven from Groenewald and Herlegem. The musketry fire of all the infantry engaged at close quarters in the enclosed, broken country was now perhaps the most intense that had yet been heard anywhere. But a third of



THE ENCIRCLEMENT

the French army had not yet been engaged. Their reserves were enormous. Large masses could be seen moving to reinforce their right, while the greater part of their left wing and all its cavalry still overhung Eugene. The Captain-General could no longer expect the supreme results he had hoped for from Overkirk's intervention on his left. But neither need he any longer fear defeat in that quarter, for the Dutch infantry were now flowing fast out of Oudenarde, and their leading columns, undeployed, were already beyond Mooregem. His dominant thought was for Eugene. The whole of the British cavalry, seventeen squadrons under Lumley, were now at Bever. Once Overkirk was in action they were no longer indispensable to the safety of the army. Marlborough therefore at seven o'clock sent his second

## MARLBOROUGH

great reinforcement to Eugene. The brilliant regiments which had charged so finely at Elixem trotted swiftly across the field, and drew out behind the Ghent road to strengthen Eugene's right flank against the expected onslaught of the French left wing.

Thus we see Marlborough, himself in the height of action only a few hundred yards behind the swaying, quivering infantry fighting line, having also a momentous hope in his heart, depriving himself first of Lottum and then of Lumley for the sake of the general battle. It is these qualities of perfect comprehensive judgment, serene in disappointment or stress, unbiased by the local event in which he was himself involved, this fixing with untiring eye and absolute selflessness the problem as a whole, that deserve the study and respect of soldiers of every age.

Just as Lottum had arrived in time to throw back the French assault and recover the villages of Grocnwald and Herlegem, so did Lumley and the English horse reach their new station on Eugene's right when they were needed. The strain upon Eugene was, as Marlborough had truly felt, almost overwhelming. So bitter was the struggle, and yet so good the hopes that a further advance could be made, that Eugene a little before seven at Count Lottum's appeal launched the whole of his available cavalry upon a desperate charge. "It was only an hour before dark," records Eugene in his diary,

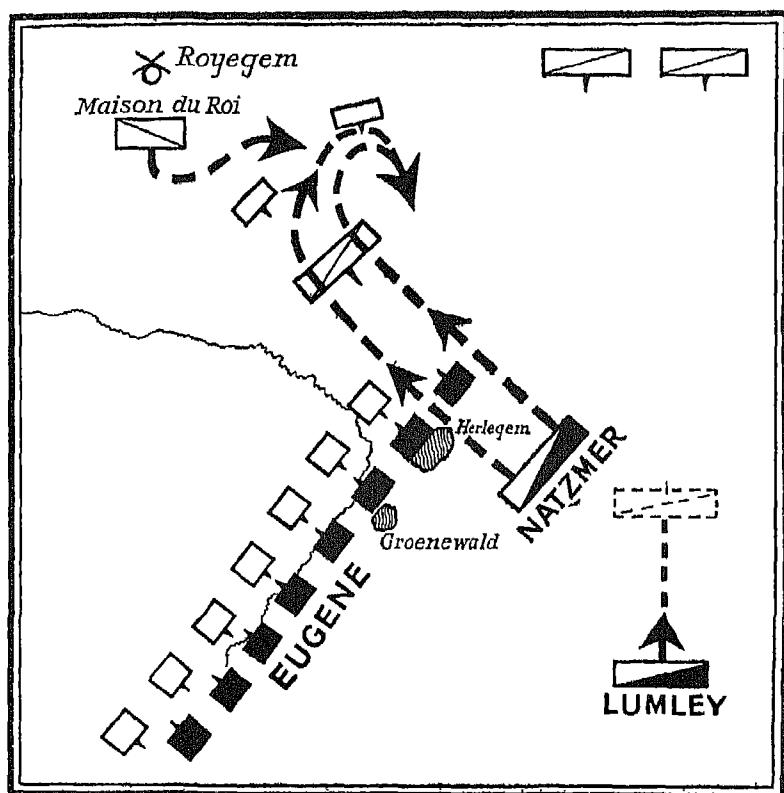
when the Prussians and Hanoverian cavalry managed to reach the small plain in a little valley, to the left of which they formed into ten or twelve squadrons [actually twenty] on the flank, after the infantry ranks had been opened and room had been made by two battalions.<sup>1</sup>

General Natzmer, with the Prussian gendarmes, had time to draw up in strict array before leading the charge against very superior numbers. He broke the French squadrons. Behind them lay intact battalions of French infantry. The Germans rode straight at these and were received with a deadly fire. Swerving to the right, they encountered more

<sup>1</sup> "Diarium"; *Feldzüge*, Series II, i, Suppt., 154.

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

infantry lining the hedgerows. The Prussian gendarmes broke two battalions, capturing their colours; but the command was now dispersed. The *Maison du Roi*, "rich in scarlet with silver facings,"<sup>1</sup> arriving in force, fell upon



NATZMER'S CHARGE

these remnants. Natzmer, left quite alone in the midst of the enemy, received four sabre-cuts, and escaped only by leaping a broad ditch, "full of water in which a half-dead horse was lying."<sup>2</sup> Survivors of his twenty squadrons found refuge behind the ranks of Cadogan's and Lottum's battalions. Three-quarters of the gendarmes perished. The twenty

<sup>1</sup> Natzmer, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

## MARLBOROUGH

squadrons existed no more as a fighting force ; but precious time had been gained. The initiative had been held. The charge of the gendarmes, as we can see from Marlborough's dispatches and from many Continental records, was long deemed memorable throughout the armies. This death ride of a cavalry division has been rightly compared to the charge of Bredow's brigade at Mars-la-Tour in 1870.<sup>1</sup> The cavalry of the French left wing, deranged by the incursion, now saw before them in the distance the seventeen English squadrons in perfect order in their path. Ill-led by their chiefs on this day, they forbore to attack them. Lumley's regiments, now the only shield on Eugene's right, remained by the prince's order motionless till darkness fell.

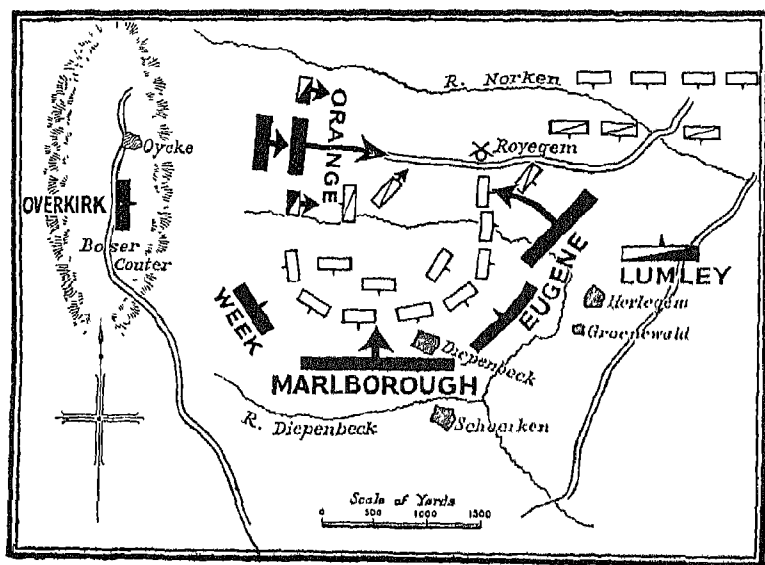
Marlborough, with his small numbers all now heavily engaged and without any reserves, could do no more in the centre than hold the line of the Diepenbeck against a renewed attack. But Overkirk's great operation upon the left was now in full swing. Week's brigades were in hot action against the French right flank. The old Velde-Marshall was already in possession of the high ground called Boser Couter, and a whole division of his infantry, sixteen battalions, occupied the hill of Oycke. From this point the entire field was visible. He saw himself in a position almost to surround the French army. He wheeled to the right and, having received an express order from Marlborough, advanced from Oycke towards Royegem. This deadly attack was delivered by four brigades of Dutch infantry, sustained by twelve squadrons of Danish cavalry. At the head of the Dutch, commanding for the first time the troops of the Republic, rode the young Prince of Orange. He was but nineteen years of age. This was his first battle. Down the slopes before Royegem he marched irresistibly. The French infantry in his path were swept away. The Maison du Roi failed to stop him. At the same time upon the other flank Cadogan attacked successfully from Groenewald. The entire French right and a great part of their centre were now almost surrounded. The straight line had become a vast horseshoe of flame

<sup>1</sup> F. Taylor, *The Wars of Marlborough*, ii, 138.

## THE BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

within which, in a state of ever-increasing confusion, were more than fifty thousand Frenchmen. It was now half-past eight. But for the failure of the bridges in Oudenarde this situation might have been reached an hour earlier.

For more than two hours the enemy princes had clustered around or upon the mill of Royegem. With them was the numerous train of military courtiers and nobility who enjoyed



8.30 P.M. : THE NET CLOSES

the coveted privilege of personal attendance. The slopes about the mill were crowded with several hundreds of orderlies, grooms, and valets, holding the led horses of the royal circle and of the headquarters staff. The Duke of Burgundy and his younger brother, with the pathetic figure of the English Pretender neglected in the background, gazed with anxious, fascinated eyes upon the battle which was raging along a wide crescent a mile away to the south-east. They could see from Herlegem, on their left, almost to the castle of Bevere, on their right, the infantry of the two armies in the meadows between the thickets and woodland,

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locked together in fierce fight, swaying forward and back, charging and counter-charging amid a ceaseless roar of musketry and drifting wreaths of smoke. They had witnessed the confusion and surging masses of horsemen which had marked the charge of Natzmer's cavalry division. Reassuring reports had arrived. The assailants had been driven back and cut to pieces. But the left was none the less receding. The line of smoke and flame was now drawn nearer than the villages so lately captured. Masses of enemy infantry could be seen advancing across the open spaces behind Groenewald, while out on the slopes beyond the Ghent road long lines of scarlet horsemen sat motionless upon their horses as if at a review.

Sombre reflections held the mind of Fénelon's pupil, and gnawing anxiety. Here was the army of France, at whose head he had been marching a few hours before, short of ammunition and in increasing disorder, locked in deadly grapple with an enemy whose strength seemed inexhaustible, whose numbers were growing every moment, and whose confident aggression proclaimed the presence and the genius of Marlborough and Eugene. This was the battle which he, heir to the crown of France, had been sent forth to win. War, yesterday the jaunty boon-companion, now glared upon him with lineaments of fury, hate, and doom. Where was Vendôme? Where was that brutal, bestial, but none the less tremendous warrior who had been placed at his side to win him military glory, whose advice he could lean upon, whose decisions in the end he had been directed to obey? The Marshal was in the cauldron fighting hand to hand, organizing and reorganizing attacks, sending messages which were incomprehensible and orders which were obsolete by the time they arrived. The one thing the Great King had always forbidden, and which Burgundy had above all others resolved to avoid—namely, an infantry battle in enclosed and broken country—was now burning away the grand army of France. Such is the chastisement of those who presume to gain by easy favour and pretence the glories which the gods reserve for their chosen heroes.

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But what is this stir close at hand? Why has every one about him turned so suddenly their backs upon the battle? What is this at which they are all staring in the opposite quarter? Who are these troops in ordered lines and masses who are crowning the skyline by Oycke village, and now already rolling forward down the grassy slopes less than a mile from the mill? Horse and foot in great numbers far behind the French flank—nay, upon its rear, driving all before them, their volleys flashing red in the fading light! Messengers gallop up with terrible news, followed by fugitives and riderless horses. The *Maison du Roi* in the fields by Chobon hamlet can be seen wheeling to the rightabout to meet this new appalling peril. A wave of panic swept the courtly group; the royal princes scrambled to their saddles. The troops of the French right, says Saint-Simon, “gave ground so fast that the valets of the suites of all who accompanied the princes fell back upon them with an alarm, a rapidity, and a confusion which swept them along with extreme speed and much indecency and risk towards the main battle on the left.”<sup>1</sup> But here too they met masses of French infantry retreating and dispersing in disorder before Cadogan’s final effort. Unhappy princelings, far astray from the mirrored halls and obsequious glitter of Versailles! We are assured by those who attended them that they behaved with courage and composure, that they encouraged the troops, praised the officers, asked the generals they met what ought to be done, and told Vendôme when they found him what they thought themselves. This may well be so. But over their actions, as over the carnage of the field, night and the increasing dissolution of the army now cast an impenetrable cloak.

It is this phase of the battle of Oudenarde which suggests so strongly the German victory at Tannenberg. But with weapons that shot no more than a hundred yards there was no means of covering the many gaps between the encircling brigades. The fish were in the net, but the meshes were large enough to let the greater part of the catch escape. Nevertheless, the circle was in fact completed. The Prince

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon, vi, 56.



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of Orange and Cadogan from the opposite ends of the line of battle actually fired into each other near the mill of Royegem. Total darkness descended upon the wild confusion of the field. Marlborough at nine o'clock ordered all allied troops to cease fire, halt where they stood, and lie on their arms till daybreak.

It must have been nearly ten o'clock when the defeated leaders met in the village of Huyse on the high ground behind the Norken, and on horseback a tragic council of war was held. Two-thirds of the army were in a welter, surrounded by the enemy, and to a large extent beyond control. No one knew how to lay hands upon the remaining third which had not yet been engaged, including all the cavalry of the left wing. Vendôme, habitually careless of his appearance, now dishevelled with the sweat and dust of physical combat, arrived furious with the enemy, with Burgundy, and above all, for good reasons, with himself. What should be done? Burgundy sought to speak, but the Marshal, drunk with authority and anger, told him to hold his tongue. "Your Royal Highness must remember that you only came to this army upon condition that you obeyed me."<sup>1</sup> We have to transport ourselves into that vanished age to realize what Saint-Simon calls the "enormity" of these words, spoken as they were before a score of officers of all ranks. They seem, moreover, important in judging Vendôme's responsibility for the misconduct of the battle. If this was the relation established between him and Burgundy by the King, nothing can relieve Vendôme's military reputation. He had without purpose or reason delayed crossing the Scheldt. He had been completely surprised by Marlborough's march. He had flung the army piecemeal into a disastrous action; he had abandoned the functions of commander; he had quitted the centre, from which alone they could be exercised. He had crashed about in the front line like an enraged animal, squandering the strength and cohesion of the troops, and upon his head rested, and rests, the burden and shame of an easily avoidable disaster.

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon, vi, 57.

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The Marshal was for fighting it out. A little more than half of the army, he said, had been engaged. Let them spend the night in reorganizing the front. Let them bring up the intact reserves from the unused left wing. Let them fall to at dawn and see what was left at the end of the day. But this personal ardour did not correspond with the facts. No one dared outface him, but the silence struck its chill. Officer after officer, Puységur, Matignon, Cheladet, arrived in succession. All declared that the army was in total disorder, and that to await the onslaught of the Allies at daybreak was to court certain destruction. The only course was an immediate retreat upon Ghent. The consensus was overwhelming. It was also right. If the French had engaged little more than half their army, the Allies had fought during the greater part of the day with scarcely a third of their strength. Another third had hardly been in action for two hours; and, according to Prince Eugene,<sup>1</sup> "there were still troops crossing the Scheldt late on into the night."

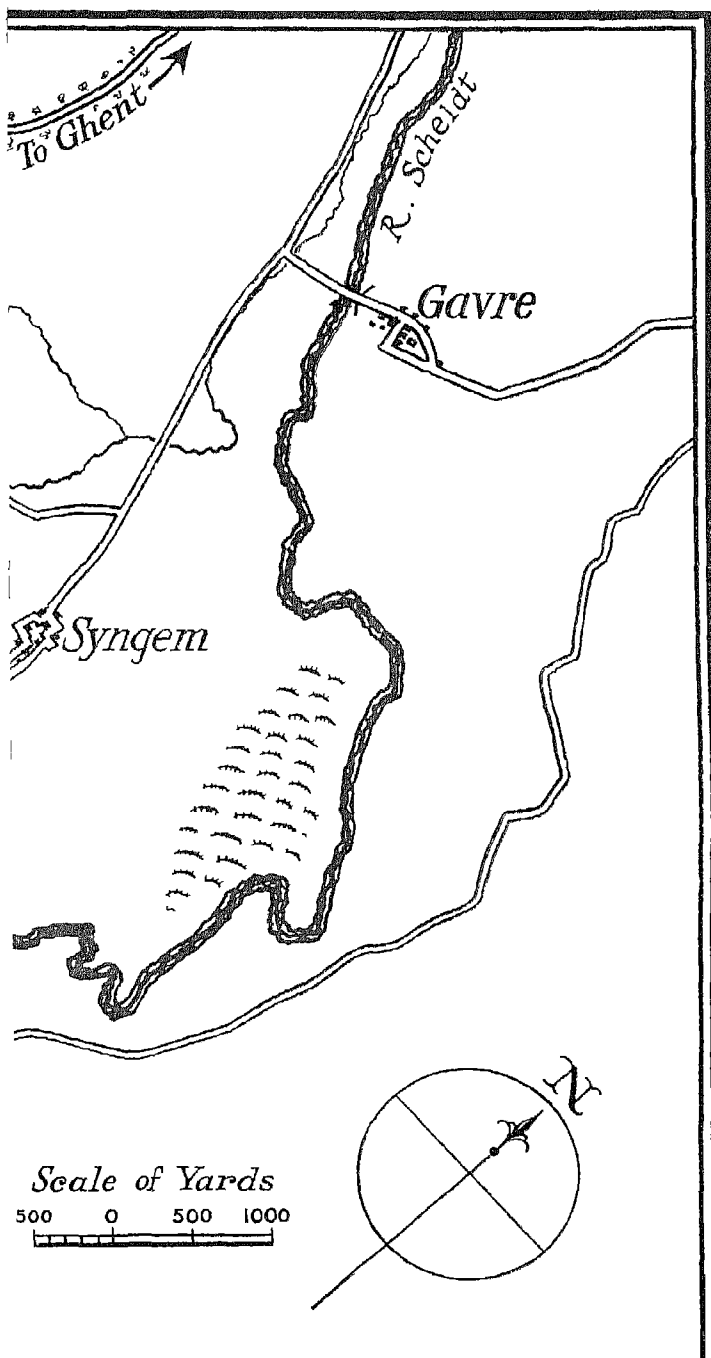
When Vendôme saw himself alone in opinion, and was also probably himself shaken in his own mind, he relieved his passions in the most cowardly manner. "Very well, gentlemen," he said; "I see you all think it best to retire. And you, Monseigneur," fixing the Duke of Burgundy, "have long had that wish." With this crowning insult he gave the order to retreat to Ghent, and disappeared into the night. Once this signal was given the French army fled from the field of Oudenarde. The brave troops still in close contact with the enemy were left to their fate. The masses imperfectly surrounded could take their chance. All the rest set off along the highroad at their best pace. There had been some discussion whether the princes should be taken in their carriages under escort to Bruges, but Vendôme had dismissed this as shameful, and the royalties jogged along on horseback with the rest. No one knew the whereabouts of General Rosen and the cavalry of the left wing. However, they were in fact marching off with the rest in the darkness. The Maison du Roi had cut their way through the

<sup>1</sup> "Diarium"; *Feldzüge*, Series II, i, Suppt., 155.

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encircling Dutch, many squadrons of dragoons being sacrificed to secure their retreat. Ghent became the only thought for the great majority; but large numbers broke out through the thin cordon of the Allies in all directions. Some fled to Courtrai. Nearly ten thousand men struck across the Scheldt towards the French frontier.

Meanwhile the Allies could do no more in the pitch dark but stand their ground and arrest all who collided with their front. Many regiments and battalions surrendered. Stragglers in great numbers were collected. By a stratagem of Eugene's, Huguenot officers in the allied service were sent into the darkness calling out the names of famous regiments, "A moi, Picardie," "A moi, Roussillon," etc., and taking prisoner those who rallied to these calls. It had now begun to rain, and the victors sank worn out upon the ground and slept on their arms. Marlborough and Eugene remained on horseback throughout the night. Reinforcements were brought up, and at least twenty thousand weary troops, who had not yet been engaged, were guided to their places for a general attack at dawn. But dawn disclosed the battlefield occupied only by the prisoners, the wounded, and the slain.



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE MORROW OF SUCCESS

BATTLES are the principal milestones in secular history. <sup>1707,</sup>  
Modern opinion resents this uninspiring truth, and <sup>July</sup>  
historians often treat the decisions of the field as incidents in the dramas of politics and diplomacy. But great battles, won or lost, change the entire course of events, create new standards of values, new moods, new atmospheres, in armies and in nations, to which all must conform. The effects of Oudenarde, both moral and material, transformed as by magic the campaign of 1708. The hasty retreat of the French did not stop at Ghent. They did not feel safe until they had crossed the canal from Bruges beyond the town. Some one—the honour is disputed—had organized an effective rearguard, and the forty squadrons which Marlborough sent in pursuit met with a stiff resistance. Dismay and disorder none the less gripped the French troops, and their leaders resigned themselves to waiting upon the Allies. Marlborough and Eugene were united: Burgundy and Berwick were widely separated, the former behind his canal, the latter now the sole defence of France. The French army never recovered during the whole of 1708 from the shock, and the remarkable operations of the Allies are only to be explained by this fact.

When Marlborough rode into the fortress of Oudenarde about nine A.M. on the 12th the fine old square—which stands little touched to this day—was already filled with French prisoners, and they continued, as Hare says, “to come in by droves for many hours.”<sup>1</sup> He sent Lord Stair, with whom he had contracted a friendship, to London with the news. He wrote forthwith to Godolphin.

<sup>1</sup> July 12, 1708; Hare Papers, H.M.C., p. 218.

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July 12

I have been so very uneasy, and in so great a hurry for some days, that I should not be able to write, were I not supported by the good success we had yesterday. The particulars you will have from Lord Stair, who will give you this. . . . I must ever acknowledge the goodness of God, in the success He was pleased to give us; for I believe Lord Stair will tell you they were in as strong a post as is possible to be found; but you know when I left England I was positively resolved to endeavour by all means a battle, thinking nothing else would make the Queen's business go on well. This reason only made me venture the battle yesterday, *otherwise I did give them too much advantage*; but the good of the Queen and my country shall always be preferred by me before any personal concern; for I am very sensible if I had miscarried, I should have been blamed. I hope I have given such a blow to their foot that they will not be able to fight any more this year. My head aches so terribly that I must say no more.<sup>1</sup>

And to Sarah:

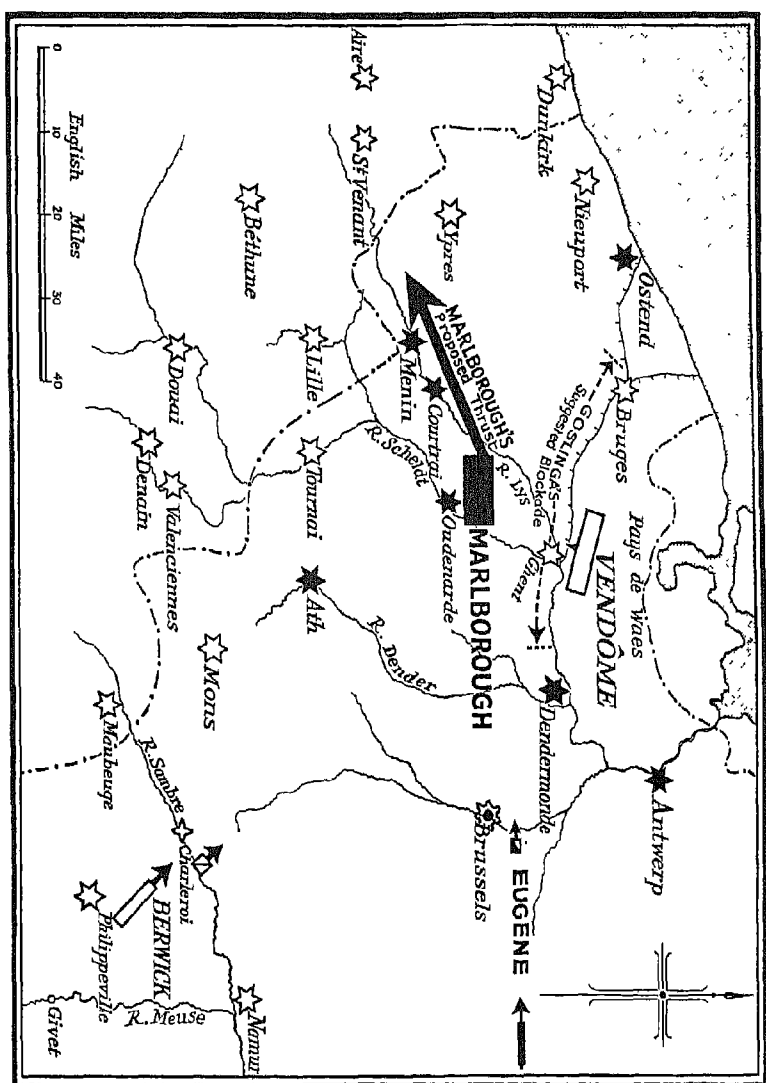
CAMP AT OUDENARDE

July 12, 1708

I have neither spirits nor time to answer your last three letters; this being to bring the good news of a battle we had yesterday, in which it pleased God to give us at last the advantage. Our foot on both sides having been all engaged has occasioned much blood; but I thank God the English have suffered less than any of the other troops; none of our English horse having been engaged. I do, and you must, give thanks to God for His goodness in protecting and making me the instrument of so much happiness to the Queen and nation, *if* [and this is a phrase to which we must recur later] *she will please to make use of it.*

He summoned a council of war for four o'clock, and meanwhile, after snatching a few hours' sleep, discussed and decided the next moves with Prince Eugene. The council met in Governor Chanclos' house. Marlborough and Eugene in preconcerted agreement proposed to march westward at once across the Lys, and threaten the French frontier and its

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 153-154.



ALTERNATIVE COURSES AFTER OUDENARDE

## MARLBOROUGH

fortresses. The strategic situation was peculiar. While Vendôme continued at Ghent he paralysed the whole water communications of the Lys and Scheldt by which the siege-train could reach the allied army. The French frontier was protected by a strong line of fortifications which ran from the fortress of Lille through Warneton and Ypres, and was thence prolonged to the sea by the water defences controlled from Dunkirk. To pierce and level these lines before they could be occupied by Berwick's army was to lay bare the path into France. Such a menace, it was hoped, would force Vendôme to evacuate Ghent and Bruges and bring his army to the defence of France. Such was the advice of "the Princes."

Overkirk, Dopff,<sup>1</sup> Cadogan, and most of the Dutch Deputies concurred. But Goslinga had a different plan. After making what he calls "a pretty compliment" about opposing such illustrious commanders, he urged that Burgundy and the French army at Ghent and Bruges, with their backs to the sea, should be blockaded, walled in, and starved out. There is no need to ridicule this plan as some writers have done. He had previously half gained his colleague Geldermalsen to his ideas. It was a large and plausible proposition of war. All the generals, following the lead of "the Princes," were against it. It was pointed out, first, that the line of investment was nearly fifty miles long and could thus be pierced at any time by a desperate sortie; secondly, that the area in which Burgundy would be confined was very extensive and comprised a considerable Dutch population, which would certainly starve first; thirdly, that the French communications along the sea-coast by Nieupoort and Dunkirk would be hard to close; finally, that Berwick's army, gathering all the troops from the fortresses, would fall at a concerted moment upon the allied rear. These reasons were deemed solid, and Goslinga's project was, not without regrets and respect, dismissed by every one present. Even Geldermalsen, with whom Marlborough had become reconciled, fell away from him. Nothing could be more reasonable and straightforward than this discussion and decision. To measure

<sup>1</sup> One of the Dutch generals. See Vol. II, p. 301.



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Goslinga we must read his comments on it in his own words, and note the discreditable motives which it was his habit of mind to impute to every one who differed from him or stood between him and the military career which he fondly pictured for himself.

The two Deputies who followed me supported the Princes (God knows why. I fear however that their jealousy of *some glory I had gained in the battle* [this will be perceived later] can only have had too much influence). Geldermalsen inclined to my opinion, it is true, but feebly like a courtier, as he had been by profession. . . . Besides that, he is by nature weak and too much of a politician. Cadogan and Dopff also followed the Princes, the first because he had the same interest as others in prolonging the war. The other is naturally feeble, irresolute, and a courtier, not daring to take responsibility and feeling his way.<sup>1</sup>

Of Eugene he says besides, that "he always adopted the views of Marlborough out of the deference which the Court of Vienna had for England."<sup>2</sup> Yet the essence of his account of the battle is the complete ascendancy of Eugene and Marlborough's passive submission to his leadership!

Thus there is not one of these colleagues, commanders, and generals for whom some insult is not reserved. Marlborough was bent on prolonging the war for his own corrupt gains. Cadogan shared his profits. Eugene was politically under Marlborough's influence, and as a military man had an interest in delaying peace. Overkirk was "quasi-moribund" and subservient to the favour of the Princes. Dopff was a dolt.

The fact that Marlborough had placed Eugene in command of so large a part of his army in the height of Oudenarde was eagerly seized upon by his detractors in England as a proof that it was Eugene who had won the battle. "The 'moderate' party attributes the glory of Oudenarde to Eugene."<sup>3</sup> Marlborough's friends naturally resented this.

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Archives of the French Foreign Office, July 24, 1708; *Correspondance Politique, Angleterre*, tome 225.

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Every effort was made by letters and insinuations to breed jealousy between the two commanders. Not the slightest impression was produced upon either. "I dare say," wrote Marlborough (July 30) to an English correspondent, "Prince Eugene and I shall never differ about our share of laurels. While the public has any real benefit of my services, I shall not be much concerned at any endeavours that may be used to lessen them."<sup>1</sup>

We may contrast this Olympian calm with Goslinga's insolent tale of the battle.

A large part [of the army] had passed the river towards 4 o'clock; but since Milord [Marlborough] had not yet chosen his field of battle, and appeared visibly embarrassed upon the issue, and gave no positive order for the arrangement of the troops, Count Rechteren and I, seeing how things stood, set ourselves to consider what should be done about it. We were however soon in mutual agreement. We resolved to address ourselves to Prince Eugene, to beg him to be so good as to take upon himself in this dangerous juncture the command of the army. He answered that, like us, he was convinced that without delaying a moment it was necessary to take a decision [*il falloit prendre son parti*]; but, finding himself without troops and a volunteer in the army, it would not become him to interfere in the command. We pressed him afresh, and set before him our danger and that of the whole common cause, the safety of which depended on this fine and formidable army; at last we conjured him by all that he held dear, his country, his master, his glory, and that so effectively that he said to us in a gay and confident tone, "All right, gentlemen, I give in to you and will do what you ask of me." He crammed his hat upon his head at the same time and set spurs to his horse, and advanced to the head of the line. He first gave orders to fill in and cross a little stream which ran across the fields and to deploy in an open plain to the right. This was done there and then; the movement compelled the enemy, who had already shown signs of occupying it [the plain], to abandon it in haste.<sup>2</sup>

If this were true it would indeed be a striking episode. The scene is supposed to have occurred beyond the bridges

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 164.

<sup>2</sup> Goslinga, p. 56.

## THE MORROW OF SUCCESS

where Marlborough, surrounded by his staff—several scores of persons—was regulating the deployment of the troops as they came over. We are invited to believe that Goslinga and his fellow-Deputy in these circumstances conferred the command of the army upon Prince Eugene, and persuaded him in this dramatic fashion to accept it, while Marlborough was left sitting on his horse supine and dumbfounded amid his abashed staff officers of several different states.

The field Deputies had, of course, no authority to supersede the Captain-General of England and Deputy Captain-General of the Republic. They had, in fact, in this campaign been instructed to obey his orders whatever they were. Still less had they the power to confer the command upon Prince Eugene. Least of all is it credible that Prince Eugene at Marlborough's side, consulted by him and acting with him, and, as we have seen, under his orders, would have paid attention to such effrontery. Could such a transaction, formal or informal, have taken place without causing an open scandal to the numerous persons who must have witnessed it? Would none of the British and foreign officers present at the bridges have commented upon it? There is no scrap of confirmatory testimony. On the contrary, Goslinga himself, with the other five Deputies, signed a report the next day in which the only mention of Eugene is that he "was present at this action." Eugene himself in his "Diarium" says nothing which could even remotely suggest such an occurrence. Biron, fresh from a captivity in the allied headquarters and full of gossip, told Saint-Simon that "Prince Eugene took command wherever he went by courtesy of Marlborough, *who preserved the entire authority*." <sup>1</sup> Grumbkow, an impartial witness, wrote to the King of Prussia:

My lord Duke shone in the battle, giving his orders with the greatest sangfroid, and exposing his person to danger like the commonest soldier. Prince Eugene showed much spirit under the heaviest fire, and was with the Prussians, whom he had specially sought out.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon, vi, 63.

<sup>2</sup> Natzmer, p. 293.

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Goslinga continues :

We had *towards five o'clock* all our first line engaged in battle. I found myself at this time with Geld [Geldermalsen] on the right, *in the presence of the two Princes*, at the head of our cavalry. . . . We did not know at this stage if our left, or how much of it, had crossed, nor what disposition of it had been made. It was to be informed upon this point, but still more to give an order to our generals to hurry, above all to take if it were possible the enemy upon their right flank, that Prince Eugene begged Geld and me to go there as fast as possible to carry these orders and have them executed by our authority as Deputies. I asked that the Prince would give us one of his adjutants, but he said that our order would have more weight than the word from a simple adjutant. We set off accordingly, wishing the *two Princes* a glorious day.<sup>1</sup>

This statement confirms the fact that Marlborough and Eugene were still together at five p.m. They were, as we have described, upon the extreme right flank in front of Heurne, and the command had not yet been divided. It was a cardinal moment in the battle. The movement of Overkirk with the left wing through Oudenarde was, of course, an integral part of Marlborough's dispositions for crossing the river. Bridges had been built many hours beforehand for that express purpose, and the orders to hasten the movement, which could have no other effect but turning the enemy's right flank, had been reiterated throughout the march. It may well be that Eugene, pestered by the continued suggestions of the two Deputies, disembariassed himself and Marlborough of their presence by sending them on a superfluous errand. This would certainly be a natural explanation.

Goslinga's account of his further personal exploits at Oudenarde has received merciless ridicule at the hands of Taylor. The Deputy assures us that he and his colleague at length found Marshal Overkirk, accompanied by the other generals of the cavalry, and gave them the "*orders of the two chiefs*." "The brave but altogether exhausted old fellow could hardly

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, pp. 55-56.

## THE MORROW OF SUCCESS

answer me, and stammered out that he *would neglect nothing*.”<sup>1</sup> He was at that moment engaged in his extremely toilsome and difficult enveloping movement which decided the battle, and his answer to the excited Deputy seems to have been all that civility required at the moment. Goslinga, shocked to see Overkirk’s cavalry making what he thought was a meaningless movement in the direction of Courtrai, galloped off to animate the infantry. Here he tells us that, when he gave orders to one of the lieutenant-generals to attack, this officer “turned a deaf ear to him.” Thereupon Goslinga dismounted from his horse and put himself at the head of Sturler’s two battalions of Swiss, “after a little compliment which I made them of wishing to fight with such brave men.”<sup>2</sup> He led them to the assault, followed by five other battalions, and eventually captured a pair of kettle-drums and performed other feats of arms in such a fashion and to such effect that only his innate modesty prevents him from claiming to have won the battle of Oudenarde himself. He preferred that this conclusion should be drawn naturally from his narrative by his children, for whose delectation it was written. It is not strange, indeed, that Goslinga did not choose to publish his memoirs in the lifetime of any who could contradict him. The wonder is that serious historians like Klopp should have cumbered their pages with these malicious inventions, and forced us to deal with them.

Lieutenant-General Biron was among the prisoners. He was personally well known to both Marlborough and Eugene, and had many friends in the allied army. The Duke released him almost at once on special parole, prescribing only that he should go direct to Paris without passing through the French army. The object was no doubt to make sure that Louis XIV had an early and independent account of the magnitude of the defeat. Meanwhile Biron lived at the headquarters, and was treated with intimacy and consideration. Some of his statements recorded by Saint-Simon are illuminating. “He told me that the day after the fight, being at

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

## MARLBOROUGH

dinner at Marlborough's quarters with many officers, the Duke asked him all of a sudden for news about the "Prince of Wales," adding excuses for referring to him by [no more than] that title."<sup>1</sup> Biron was astonished at this, and smilingly replied that there need be "no difficulty on that point because in the French army the prince carried no other name than that of the Chevalier de St George." He then praised the character and behaviour of the young prince. Marlborough listened with deep attention, and said before every one that it was a deep satisfaction to him to learn so much good about him, because he could not help being "keenly interested in this young man." The Frenchman noticed the gleam in Marlborough's eye, and that the stern faces of the English officers around the table lit with pleasure. No incident reveals more clearly the latent streak of sentimental Jacobitism which Marlborough and the English Army cherished and, oddly enough, felt able to indulge more particularly in their hours of triumph over the French supporters of the Jacobite cause. Even on the morrow of a battle in which the exiled claimant and heir to the throne had committed the great error of drawing his sword for France against England, these resolute and faithful officers of Queen Anne were thrilled by news of the Pretender. It is a strange commentary on these times that had Anne herself been able to overhear Biron's account her heart would have made the same unbidden response. "Maybe 'tis our brother."

Biron summed up his impressions of the allied camp as follows :

He was struck by an almost royal magnificence at Prince Eugene's quarters and a shameful parsimony at those of the Duke of Marlborough, who ate the more often at the tables of others ; a perfect agreement between the two Captains for the conduct of affairs, of which the details fell much more on Eugene ; the profound respect of all the generals for these two chiefs, but a tacit preference on the whole for Prince Eugene, without the Duke of Marlborough being at all jealous.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon, vi, 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

## THE MORROW OF SUCCESS

Marlborough could no doubt have enormously increased his popularity with the high officers if, in accordance with the custom of those days, he had dispensed a lavish hospitality, and lived in the field, as he could well afford, with the style and magnificence of a prince. His frugal, thrifty habits and the great fortune he was known to be saving were a handicap which his genius accepted and carried at a disproportionate cost. Regimental officers and private soldiers of the army, however, saw none of this seamy side. They would not, in any case, have been invited to the entertainments and banquets of the Commander-in-Chief. They continued to admire the manner in which the affairs of the army were conducted, the regularity of their promotions, pay, clothing, and food amid all the difficulties of war, and the assurance, now in their minds a certainty, that they would be led only to victory. As one of his privates wrote, "The Duke of Marlborough's attention and care was over us all."<sup>1</sup> Without palliating the fault of stinginess when displayed in the circles of rank and fashion, it is only just to remember the other side. The generals shrugged their shoulders at the foible of their illustrious chief; the rank and file, and the mass of the officers who, often with families at home, lived on nothing but their pay, may well have thought his conduct a good example to the 'fighting sparks' and wealthy nobles whose baggage-wagons flicked the dust over the marching columns.

Most of the great masters of war have preferred to live with simplicity in the field. Cæsar, Frederick, Napoleon—all avoided the banquetings and junketings which marked the aristocratic organization of eighteenth-century wars. Modern opinion and practice has inculcated austere personal habits in commanders whose duty it may be at any time to send men by the thousand to their death. Luxurious ostentation of any kind would have been fatal to any general in the American Civil War. The utmost plainness of living, brief meals, and formal demeanour were the rules of the British, French, and German headquarters in the Great War. No one

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Adventures of Matthew Bishop*, p. 194.

## MARLBOROUGH

grudged a colonel or a brigadier when out of the front line the best feast he and his officers could procure; but upon the High Command and their staffs an almost monastic simplicity was enforced. Thus the vices of one age become the virtues of another. Marlborough's habit of dining frequently with different commanders in his army of course saved him money. It may have had other conveniences. He got to know the officers of the army as a whole. They no doubt felt cheered and honoured by a visit from the Commander-in-Chief. He was personally most abstemious, and did not like sitting long at table. As a guest he could leave whenever he chose to resume his work. In fact, there are many excuses to be made for his behaviour.

Every effort to minimize the defeat was made by Burgundy and Vendôme to the King and by the *Paris Gazette* to the world. There had been, it was alleged, a partial and indecisive combat, and the losses had been moderate but equal. These absurdities find repetition even in the instructed pages of Pelet. It was some weeks before Louis XIV himself realized the gravity of the event. His army had left six thousand killed and wounded on the field. Nine thousand prisoners, including eight hundred officers, were taken. At least another fifteen thousand men were scattered about the countryside and separated from the main army. Many of these, however, eventually returned to their duty, or were put to some other service. "It is most certain," wrote Marlborough a fortnight later,

that the success we had at Oudenarde has lessened their army at least 20,000 men, but that which I think our greatest advantage consists in the fear that is among their troops, so that I shall seek all occasions of attacking them. But their army is far from being inconsiderable, for when the Duke of Burgundy's army shall join that of the Duke of Berwick, they will be at least one hundred thousand men. If it had pleased God that we had had one hour's daylight more at Oudenarde, we had in all likelihood made an end of this war.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough to Godolphin, July 26; Coxe, iv, 167-169.



## THE MORROW OF SUCCESS

The casualties of the Allies were almost exactly three thousand, and this loss was more than repaired by recruitment from deserters and captured mercenaries. All our friends, the diarists, Colonel Kane, Major Blackadder, Captain Parker, Sergeant Millner, Privates Deane and Matthew Bishop, fought in the battle. Blackadder noted (June 30, O.S.), "This is another great Ebenezer of my life, to be added to Hochstet, Ramillies etc. We fought the French, and by the great mercy of God, beat them. I was liberally supplied with courage, resolution and a calm mind. *All is the gift of God.* . . . My frame was more serene and spiritual than ordinary. My thoughts were much upon the 103d Psalm, which I sung (in my heart) frequently upon the march." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Diary of Lieutenant-Colonel J. Blackader* (1824), pp. 318-319.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE THWARTED INVASION

1708,  
July-  
August

MARSHAL BERWICK had reached the Meuse at Givet on the day of the battle. His army of 34 battalions and 56 squadrons was still toiling by forced marches; but on the 12th its head lay on the Sambre. Here he learned from the governor of Mons that "there had been an engagement on the 11th near Oudenarde . . ., that the enemy had had the advantage, and that our army was retreating towards Ghent in great disorder." In spite of the need of resting his troops and allowing his rear to close up, the bad news determined him to hasten forward to Mons, which he reached on the 14th with twenty squadrons. He found great numbers of stragglers and small bodies who had escaped south and homeward from the battlefield, streaming in upon the fortress. He collected and organized these into a force of nine thousand men, with which he reinforced the garrisons of Tournai, Lille, and Ypres. None of these troops were found capable of further service in the field, and in the French accounts of the campaign they are frequently referred to as "*débris* of the Grand Army." Here we have another measure of the gravity of Oudenarde.

Berwick's sure instinct made him fearful for Lille. Ordering his army to concentrate upon Douai, he went himself to Lille on the 14th to prepare for the coming shock. "I took care to supply the fortresses with all sorts of stores, and as my infantry came up I distributed it among them, in order that, which way soever the enemy should take, they might meet with opposition."<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough's army lay during the 12th on the battlefield recovering from its immense exertions; but at midnight on the 13th, in accordance with the decision of the council

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, II, 12.



## THE THWARTED INVASION

of war, the Duke dispatched Count Lottum with thirty battalions and forty squadrons to seize and level the French lines about Warneton and Comines. He followed himself with the main army the next day. Eugene went to Brussels, where his infantry was now expected. Berwick, who had scented this danger also, made every effort to occupy the almost undefended lines. But Count Lottum, marching fast, reached the fortifications in time, before dawn on the 15th. "We slung our Firelocks," says Private Matthew Bishop,

and every man had a Shovel in his hand; and when we came to the place appointed, we ran up upon their works. It was like running up the side of a house. When we got to the top we began to throw it down as fast as possible in order to make way for the Army.<sup>1</sup>

Five hundred prisoners were taken. The pathway into France was now laid bare and open. During the afternoon Marlborough arrived at Werwicq, which became for some time his headquarters.

From here he wrote a series of letters to English agents abroad in order to repair the injury which the fall of Ghent had done. His postscript to Stanhope led to a memorable result.

CAMP AT WERWICQ  
July 15 [1708]

. . . You have here the Copy of a Letter from the Admiralty to the Earl of Sunderland, about the wintering of a Squadron in the Mediterranean. I send it only for your own information, that you may, by your insinuations, prevent the Courts putting too great a stress upon it, in case it should be found impracticable, for 'tis certain our Sea Officers are the best judges what may be done with safety in this case.

*"I am intierly convinced that nothing can be done effectually without  
"we you if possible to take Port Mahone, and to let me  
ther Port, so that I may continue to presse  
them in Engour*

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Adventures of Matthew Bishop*, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, 108.

## MARLBOROUGH

*John to Sarah*

WERWICQ  
July 16

. . . I was in good hopes that the diligence I have made in getting into the French country (for I am now behind their lines) would have obliged them to abandon Ghent; but as yet it has not had that effect, but on the contrary M. de Vendôme declares he will sacrifice a strong garrison rather than abandon that town, which, if he keeps his word, he will give me a great deal of trouble; for till we are masters of Ghent we can have no cannon. . . . The Duke of Berwick came to Lille the day before yesterday, but his troops will not be here these three or four days; those of Prince Eugene came last night to Brussels, so that both our armies will be abundantly recruited. However, I believe the French will be careful not to venture any more this year; *but the greatest mischief they can do is the venturing all for the preserving of Ghent.* . . .<sup>1</sup>

It is curious to notice how Vendôme and Marlborough from their opposite standpoints were in complete accord upon strategic values. Marlborough hoped, however, that he would succeed in forcing Louis XIV to overrule Vendôme's correct decision.

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

July 16

My blood is so extremely heated that I must refer you to what Mr Cardonnel will write to the Secretary's office of what has passed since my Lord Stair left the army. If we had been six hours later, I am afraid we should not have been able to force these lines; for M. de Motte was got with his little army to Ypres, and the Duke of Berwick was at the same time at Lille. We are now masters of marching where we please, but can make no siege till we are masters of Ghent, from whence only we can have our cannon. The camp the French are now in, behind the canal of Bruges, makes them entirely masters of Ghent and Bruges; but at the same time they leave all France open to us, which is what I flatter myself the King of France and his council will never suffer; so that I hope by Thursday M. de Vendôme will receive orders from Court not to continue

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 156-157.

## THE THWARTED INVASION

in the camp where he is, from whence we are not able to force him but by famine.

I am taking measures for attacking Ghent as soon as he marches; and if the Duke of Vendôme's resolution of staying where he is be approved at Court, I shall then endeavour to cut off all provisions, as much as possible, from going to him; for if he stays, and we can ruin that army, France is undone; but if they can subsist longer than we can, they will be able by that to hinder us from doing anything considerable from want of our cannon. Upon the whole the hazard to them is so very great that I cannot think the King of France will venture it. Four or five days will let us see their intentions. In the meantime I shall take what rest I can, in order to be the better able to serve, for this minute my head is so very hot that I am obliged to leave off writing. . . .<sup>1</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

July 19

. . . That which hinders us from acting with vigour is that as long as the French are masters of Ghent we cannot make use either of the Scheldt or the Lys. But we are using our utmost endeavours to get some cannon by land, which meets with infinite difficulties; but we must overcome them, or we shall have very little fruit of our victory. The Duke of Vendôme is not contented with having the canal before him, but he is also retrenching, as if he intended to stay there the rest of this campaign. But when the King of France shall see that we have a probability of getting a battering train, I believe he will not let his own country be abandoned for the maintaining their treacherous conquest of Ghent.<sup>2</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

July 23

. . . We continue still under the great difficulty of getting cannon. . . . We have ordered twenty battering pieces to be brought from Maestricht, and we have taken measures for sixty more to be brought from Holland. The calculation of the number of draught horses, to draw this artillery, amounts to sixteen thousand horses, by which you will see the difficulties we

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 158-159.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 159-160.

## MARLBOROUGH

meet with ; but we hope to overcome them. In the meantime we send daily parties into France, which occasions great terror. . . .

I am very glad you have sent Lieutenant-General Erle to hasten the troops on board, for though the number is not great, they will much alarm the coast. I hope you will not determine to ~~send~~ these troops for Portugal, till we first see *whether they may not be of much use more on the coast of France.* You know formerly you sent me a project for Abbeville : I have looked for it, but cannot find it. I should be glad if you would send it me, for I think something of that kind might be practicable, and in that case those troops, as well as the fleet, will be necessary.

The Duke of Vendôme's army is so frightened, I am very confident if we could get them out of their retrenchments, and from behind the canal of Ghent and Bruges, we should beat them with half their numbers, especially their foot. This is one of the reasons for their staying where they are. . . .<sup>1</sup>

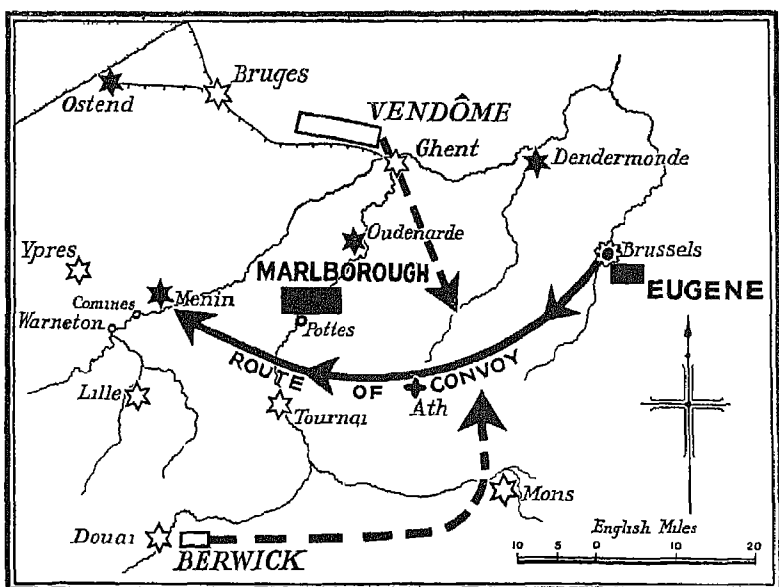
Vendôme believed that by holding his key position he could prevent any important siege. He certainly showed remarkable constancy in his opinion, and it was his will-power that kept the French army at Ghent in spite of every strategic pressure or moral provocation that the Allies could apply. Marlborough, however, with his knowledge of the resources of Holland, conceived it possible to undertake a first-class siege, although deprived of the Belgian waterways. Immense masses of munitions and stores and more than a hundred heavy cannon were moved towards Brussels from Antwerp and Maestricht through such canals and rivers as the Dutch controlled. From Brussels all must be drawn forward by road. Two great convoys would be required merely to begin the operation. Marlborough's army had been separated from its heavy baggage since the first movements in July, and to transport this to them and replenish the field parks was urgent. The second and far larger convoy would carry the siege-train and the heavy projectiles. The process of collecting the necessary sixteen thousand horses from Holland and from the armies, and of extorting them

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 165-166.

## THE THWARTED INVASION

from the countryside and from French territory, must take several weeks, and was at once begun.

A glance at the map will show that both these convoys had very nearly seventy-five miles to traverse through a region in which they could be attacked from opposite sides by both French armies separately or in combination; Vendôme could



THE FIRST CONVOY

descend from Ghent, and Berwick could strike north from Mons. The securing of each of the convoys was therefore a major operation of war requiring the use as escort of all the troops at the disposal of the allied command. The passage of the first was accomplished during July 22-25. Eugene covered the wagon-train to the Scheldt with his army; and Marlborough advanced to receive it from him at the bridge-head he had prepared near Pottes. Berwick, who wished to attack Eugene on the way, was by the King's order held at Douai to safeguard France, and Vendôme, in spite of Berwick's timely and repeated warnings, remained obdurately behind the Bruges canal.



## MARLBOROUGH

Critics have asked why Marlborough did not march directly upon Lille, into which place Berwick was daily sending troops and supplies. The first and sufficient answer is clearly that he did not wish to involve himself in a premature attack upon any one particular fortress, until he knew the siege-train could come through from Brussels. He could not have encircled Lille for at least a week, and once the factor of uncertainty had gone the whole French effort and succour would pour in through its open gorge. By moving to Werwicq and levelling the Comines line he threatened equally Ypres, Lille, and Tournai. This uncertainty continued to the end. Even as late as August 11 Berwick was writing to Burgundy, "I have no doubt that in less than two days Lille, Tournay, or Ypres will be invested." It was only on the 12th, the day before the investment, that he could state, "The enemy are determined to lay siege to Lille."<sup>1</sup>

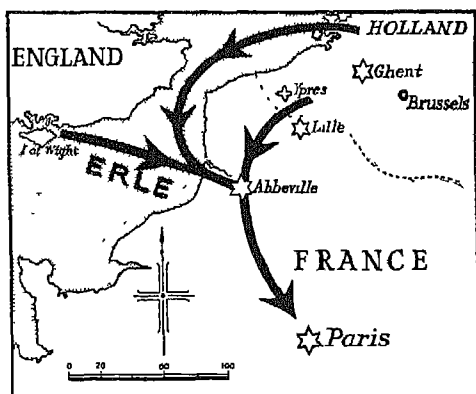
This advantage had to be balanced against the undoubted strengthening of the defences and garrison of Lille which was in progress. Suppose Marlborough had tried to carry the town of Lille by assault without artillery, suppose even that he had succeeded, everything in the theatre of war would have become quite clear, and all the French commanders could have acted upon certainties. There is no reason to believe that he could have stormed the fortifications on July 17 or 18 with his field troops. But if he had achieved this questionable venture, he would have been obviously tethered to the citadel of Lille without any of the means of carrying the operation through. Goslinga, furious at the rejection of his blockade plan, pours out his calumnies. This needless levelling of the lines of Comines was, he asserts, in part the revenge of prolonging the war which Marlborough was taking upon the States-General for having baulked him of his desire to be Governor of Belgium in 1706, and the rest was sordid love of his pay and allowances. During the next ten days, he declares, no doubt with much truth, the resisting powers of the fortress of Lille were enormously strengthened. Marlborough and Eugene decided to face this disadvantage,

<sup>1</sup> Berwick to Burgundy, August 11 and 12; *Memoirs*, ii, 390, 391.

## THE THWARTED INVASION

and on the merits, apart from the high authority of these masters of war, their case is good. But Marlborough had yet another reason for not entangling himself prematurely in the siege of Lille.

In the days following Oudenarde he imparted to Eugene his greatest strategic design. The whole combined army should invade France, ignoring the frontier fortresses and abandoning all land communication with Holland. A new sea-base of operations should be seized and formed in French territory. Abbeville was in every way suitable. General Erle, with his six thousand men, would descend upon it from



THE THWARTED INVASION

the Isle of Wight. The English and Dutch sea-power would be used to escort and ferry round from Holland in the calm summer weather the whole mass of stores, cannon, and equipment required for the armies, and thereafter would maintain a constant flow of supplies. From Abbeville Marlborough and his illustrious comrade would march on Paris through unravaged country at the head of a hundred thousand men, and bring the war to a swift and decisive close. This movement the Duke believed would irresistibly draw in its train all the French armies and fortress garrisons. It would free Holland from the menace of Burgundy's army. It would avoid the cost, labour, and peril of reducing the great fortresses on the French frontier. It would clear or render impotent Dunkirk, Calais, and all fortresses, naval bases, and garrisons on the sea-coast. Such was the secret project of the general who was represented by his detractors as prolonging the war for his own ends.

## MARLBOROUGH

Marlborough had convinced the London Cabinet. He had, of course, expected a stubborn resistance from the Dutch. He hoped that with Eugene's aid he might overcome this. But, as we have already observed, Eugene was a land animal. He was staggered at the proposal. The dangers of leaping forward to a new base to be formed from the sea, with the terrible fortresses and strong hostile armies barring all return, seemed to this prince of tireless audacity to involve an unnatural hazard.

Without Eugene there was no hope for the plan. "By what I hear from Buys," wrote Marlborough to Godolphin (July 26),

it is plain that they [the Dutch] think enough is done for peace, and I am afraid they will not willingly give their consent for the marching of their army into France, which certainly, if it succeeded, would put a happy end to the war. . . . I have acquainted Prince Eugene with the earnest desire we have for our marching into France. He thinks it unpracticable till we have Lille for a *place d'armes* and magazine, and then he thinks we may make a very great inroad, but not be able to winter, though we might be helped by the fleet, unless we are masters of some fortified town. . . .<sup>1</sup>

And again (Marlborough to Godolphin, August 3) :

I have spoke of it to nobody but the Prince ; for by several observations I have of late made of the Deputies of our army I am afraid the States would not be for this expedition, nor anything else, where there is a venture. . . . After we have succeeded at Lille, and that [if] we shall think it feasible to support the project of Abbeville, I should agree with you that Lieutenant-General Erle should have the chief command [there] this winter. . . .<sup>2</sup>

And, finally, to Halifax, "Were our army all English, it would be feasible, but we have a great many among us who are more afraid of wanting provisions than of the enemy."<sup>3</sup> Yet at this time the gossip of the French Court credited Eugene with the desire of raiding Paris.

<sup>1</sup> COXE, IV, 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, IV, 127.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174.

## THE THWARTED INVASION

\* People exaggerate with lively pleasure the offer which Prince Eugene has made to the Duke of Marlborough, of whom he has asked for 8000 horse to go to Versailles, when he promised to bring back the King's five best pictures, and give Marlborough three of them.<sup>1</sup>

While all this was being debated Marlborough from his headquarters at Werwicq sought by every means to torment Vendôme out of Ghent. He sent cavalry detachments northward to cut off all supplies which Berwick might try to send to the main French army. He ordered the governor of Ostend to impede the communications between Bruges and Nieuport by opening such sluices as were under his control. Strict injunctions deterred the Belgian population from offering their produce to the enemy's camp. By these means he subjected Vendôme to scarcity. It was beyond his power to invoke famine. The French communications along the coast were never effectually severed. But Marlborough's greatest hope lay in raiding the French provinces which now lay open and exposed. He repeated in Artois, and to some extent in Picardy, the same severities, though greatly modified, which he had inflicted upon Bavaria in the month before Blenheim. Using fifty squadrons, sustained by infantry and guns, he entered many French towns whose names have hallowed memories for our generation. On July 23 he occupied Armentières; on the 26th La Bassée, and his cavalry burned the suburbs of Arras; on the 27th Lens. From these positions during a whole week the allied horse ravaged Artois. Crossing the Scarpe, they harried the countryside, molesting Doullens, Guise, Saint-Quentin, and Péronne. In the last week of July he had at least twenty-five thousand men in Artois gathering food, booty, and hostages. Louis XIV, unable to protect his subjects, authorized the unhappy province to compound for a contribution of fifteen hundred thousand livres. Picardy was also summoned. Following the precedent set by Villars in the previous year in Germany, they

<sup>1</sup> Archives of the French Foreign Office, August 28, 1708; *Correspondance Politique, Angleterre*, tome 225, f. 115.

## MARLBOROUGH

were invited to fix their indemnity, having regard to the arrears due from 1702. Burning and pillage enforced these extortions, and many violent deeds were done. Berwick, with such forces as he could spare from the fortress line, resisted with energy ; there was sharp cavalry fighting, but the French were everywhere outnumbered.

All that happened shows how easily the first stages of Marlborough's strategic adventure could have been achieved. He might have moved at this time the whole allied army into France behind the fortress lines, fed himself comfortably upon the country, and received his munitions and reinforcements through Abbeville. Such an invasion would have dominated the war. The lesser processes to which he was confined, although yielding immediate necessary supplies, did not procure the strategic result. Wrath and panic rose in Paris. Here was war, so long fought in foreign lands, now raging upon French soil. The Great King, who had for more than a generation laid his rod upon his neighbours, must now endure the same measure for his own people. But Vendôme stubbornly insisted that so long as he held the waterways at Ghent and strangled the Scheldt-Lys no great siege could be undertaken by the Allies, nor any lasting invasion. He induced Louis XIV to bear the woes of his subjects with fortitude. He clung to his invaluable position. He could even retaliate to some extent by harrying the Dutch province of the Pays de Waes, which was in his grip. If the siege of Lille was to be attempted Marlborough's incursion could only be temporary. He would need all his troops to bring the convoys through. By the early days of August therefore this bitter phase of the war subsided. Marlborough's garrisons still held La Bassée, Armentières, and Lens, but his whole strength was required to receive the great convoy from Eugene.

We must regard the refusal of the Allies to accept Marlborough's scheme for the invasion of France at this juncture as one of the cardinal points of the war. Although Louis had borne the injuries and humiliations which Marlborough had thus far inflicted upon him, the strain was near

## THE THWARTED INVASION

breaking-point. He forbade Berwick to quit Douai and attack the convoy. He warned Burgundy on July 30, "If the enemy resolve to cross the Somme or the Authie you should not hesitate for one moment to march towards them, taking none the less all proper measures in concert with Marshal Berwick."<sup>1</sup> And Chamillart's order of August 1 to that Marshal contains this significant passage: "You must be very attentive to any movement which the enemy may make with a considerable corps towards the Somme or the Authie. That would be a sure way of completing the ruin of Picardy and of spreading terror throughout Normandy and to the very gates of Paris."<sup>2</sup>

Thus it is certain that the spell would have worked had Marlborough been allowed to use it. If his strategy had prevailed, not only would Ghent have been freed, but all the French armies and garrisons would have been recalled to defend the capital and to confront the invasion. Great battles would have been fought in the heart of France, and victory would have provided in 1708 that triumphant peace which after so much further bloodshed the Grand Alliance was still to seek in vain.

The question arises, ought not Marlborough to have been able to enforce his conception upon Eugene and the Dutch? He had the English Cabinet behind him. The Whigs were ardent to carry the war into France. Godolphin, faithful and trusting, was still at the helm. If Eugene had been gained the Dutch could hardly have demurred. But Marlborough's admiration for Eugene, his respect for his vast experience and mastery of the art of war, made it impossible for him to force Eugene beyond his will. In the previous year he had tried to press him unduly about Toulon. It had not succeeded. Indeed, when Eugene differed from him he may well have questioned his own instinct. His infinite labours, the stresses to which he was being subjected at home, and the physical weakness and weariness which lay heavy upon him in this campaign constrained him to acquiesce, and the supreme opportunity was gone, as fate

<sup>1</sup> Pelet, viii, 57.

<sup>2</sup> Chamillart to Berwick; Berwick, *Memoirs*, II, 406.

## MARLBOROUGH

decreed, for ever. ". . . As I think," he wrote sadly on another miscarriage at this date (August 2), "most things are governed by Destiny, having done all that is possible, one should submit with patience."<sup>1</sup>

It was with a heavy heart that Marlborough now bent his thought and energies to the siege of Lille. In doing so he did not finally relinquish his design. He hoped that a ten days' bombardment would suffice for the city, and another fortnight for the citadel. If so, Eugene's condition would be established. There would still be time in the middle of September to march into France. If not, the plan must stand over to the next year. He was therefore most careful to keep General Erle's force free for the Abbeville descent, and not to disturb that place prematurely. "It will be impossible for us," he wrote to the Secretary of State (August 3),

to take our just measures for seconding Lieutenant-General Erle's design upon Abbeville till we are masters of Lille, and therefore the fleet with the troops should go directly to the coast of Normandy, and land and make what impression they can there till this siege be over, and then I shall give you timely notice when it may be proper to come this way, for we are of opinion that no attempt should be made on Abbeville, nor the least jealousy given that way, till towards the end of September.<sup>2</sup>

The coasts of Normandy and Brittany might be alarmed, but Abbeville was sacrosanct.

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

WERWICQ  
August 2

. . . We have got a great part of our cannon to Brussels, so that now our greatest application is to have it here. . . . We have an account that our parties have occasioned very great terror in Picardy, and that they exclaim very much against M. de Vendôme staying where he is; but by the measures he takes, there can be no doubt of his intention of staying there all this campaign. If we can succeed in our undertakings *we must*

<sup>1</sup> To Godolphin; Coxe, iv, 172.

<sup>2</sup> Marlborough to Boyle; *Dispatches*, iv, 147.

## THE THWARTED INVASION

*not think of winter quarters till we have obliged him to quit that country.* It must be by force, for it is not in our power to hinder them from having subsistence, even for the whole winter, if they should be permitted to stay. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The great convoy had now assembled at Brussels. The sixteen thousand horses had been procured.<sup>2</sup> Every district of Belgium and France in Marlborough's control had been compelled under threats of fire and sword to deliver every suitable horse or vehicle. In vain had Berwick ordered all horses to be brought into the French fortresses. The threat of military execution was decisive upon the country folk, who were under the hard impression of the ravages in Artois and Picardy only a week before. They had to choose between yielding their horses and having their homes burned. Louis XIV could not ask this sacrifice of subjects he could no longer protect. Strict and stern measures were also used with the farmers and peasants around Oudenarde and Ath. The armies were combed of every horse not needed for fighting. "All the generals, we ourselves," says Goslinga, "the battalions and even the vivandiers were obliged to furnish horses and chariots; the number used was incredible."<sup>3</sup> Finally the tale was complete.

The operation was studied with the utmost care. Eugene rode through from Brussels to Werwicq, and spent several days with Marlborough. Cadogan, in almost daily correspondence with the Duke, had been for some weeks at Brussels preparing all. At length the moment came. To an official letter of August 2 to Cadogan, prescribing various precautions and directing him to come with the convoy himself, and slip away with it "on the sly" (*à la sourdine*), Marlborough added this unusual and imperative postscript, written in his own hand:

*For God's sake be sure you do not risk the cannon, for I would rather come with the whole army than receive an affront. You must have*

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 172.

<sup>2</sup> For more details upon this operation Taylor's admirable and accurate account should be read (*The Wars of Marlborough*, II, 165 *et seq.*).

<sup>3</sup> Goslinga, p. 72.



## MARLBOROUGH

*people towards Ghent to be sure that, when you begin your march, they have no considerable body of their troops between the Scheldt and the Dender.*<sup>1</sup>

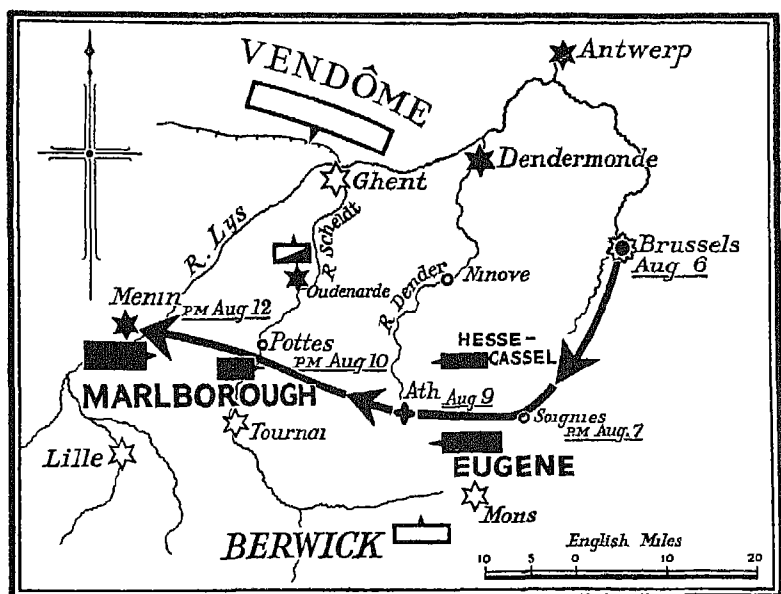
On August 4 Eugene left Marlborough's headquarters at Weerwicq for Ath, where the bulk of his own army was concentrated. Marlborough sent him in addition twenty-five squadrons and twenty-five battalions. Together with the escort of the convoy numbering thirty-five squadrons under the Prince of Hesse-Cassel, who guarded the opposite flank to Eugene, and a powerful rearguard, Eugene disposed of more than fifty thousand men. Thus covered, the convoy started on the 8th. Eighty heavy cannon, each drawn by twenty horses, twenty mortars drawn by sixteen horses, and three thousand four-horse munition wagons, formed two columns, each fifteen miles long, marching by separate roads. They took the direction not of Lille but of Mons, thus keeping as far as possible from the main French army, and incidentally deceiving Berwick, who, thinking Mons was after all the objective, reinforced that garrison by seven battalions from his field forces. By nightfall on the 7th the convoy reached Soignies unmolested. Here they found Eugene with a fighting force of forty thousand men. Marlborough's anxiety may be judged from the fact that, besides the troops with which he had already supplied Eugene, he had sent on the 5th twelve squadrons to Oudenarde to scout towards Ghent, and on rumours of a French detachment at Ninove reinforced them on the 7th by another thirty squadrons. At the same time he strengthened the garrisons of Antwerp and Brussels from various reserves in Holland, and ordered the keenest alert in both cities. He himself, with the rest of his own army, was ready to march at an hour's notice.

On the 8th before dawn the convoy turned at right angles on to the road to Ath, and marched throughout the day under shield of Eugene's army and Hesse-Cassel's cavalry. They had slipped away from Brussels "on the sly," and Vendôme could scarcely reach them during their first two marches. But the 8th, 9th, and 10th were the critical days. Upon this

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, 144.

## THE THWARTED INVASION

stage of the journey Vendôme and Berwick could combine by the shortest route. Marlborough's forty-two squadrons near Oudenarde were, however, a screen against Vendôme, and would have given timely warning to Eugene had he moved to strike the convoys between Ath and the Pottes bridgehead. The Dender was crossed at Ath on the 9th,



THE GREAT CONVOY

and the march towards the Scheldt began the next morning. Had Vendôme moved south in force he could have been encountered on this day by the whole of the allied armies. The Oudenarde squadrons would have fallen back before him, and Marlborough from Werwicq could have reached the battlefield as soon as he. But Vendôme had no thought of moving. He remained deaf to the appeals of Berwick. He suppressed Burgundy. He declared himself incredulous that any great siege could be undertaken while he held the Ghent waterways. He affected to disbelieve all reports about the great convoy. At the root of this attitude lay the fact that he did not mean to fight a battle. In this

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resolve he was right. He measured truly the havoc Oudenarde had wrought in the Grand Army. Thus the convoy crossed the Scheldt at Pottes in tranquillity during the 10th. Here they were in the midst of Marlborough's army. Thirty battalions and thirty-four squadrons under the Prince of Orange masked the fortress of Lille, while thirty squadrons at Petegem guarded the northern flank. The Duke himself marched with his remaining troops to Helchin on the 12th, and that night the siege-train safely entered the allied fortress of Menin.

This operation was watched with intense curiosity by the soldiers of all countries. Feuquières, whose pretentious and faulty judgments upon military matters have received too much respect from later writers, opined, in this case truly, that posterity would have difficulty in believing that such a feat had ever been performed. Certainly no general of those days, studying the positions of the armies upon the map, would have pronounced it possible. French military historians have criticized with extreme severity the negligence of Vendôme. Berwick roundly condemns him. Nevertheless, the terror of Oudenarde and the combined skill and prowess of Marlborough and Eugene were facts which maps and documents cannot convey. On the 13th—Blenheim Day—Eugene, crossing the stream of the Marque, joined both hands with the Prince of Orange, and the investment of Lille was complete.

Marlborough wrote that night to Count Maffei: "The Prince of Savoy has invested the town of Lille on all sides, and the cannon has arrived at Menin within reach of the siege, which will be pressed with all possible vigour, and this may at last convince the enemy that they have lost the battle of Oudenarde." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, 165.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE HOME FRONT

WE have followed during a quarter of a century Marlborough's relations with his royal mistress. They were never as intimate as those which she had cherished with Sarah, but they stood throughout at a higher level and on a broader foundation. Sarah had been the playmate of her childhood, the loved companion of her youth and prime, her partisan and comforter in every struggle as princess, a high participant in the glories of her reign. But Marlborough was to the Queen an august friend, a guide who had never led her wrong, a rock where she could always find safety, a sword never raised in vain. Although the fact was concealed for some time from the world, the Queen had now broken with Sarah. Not only had she cast her from her heart, but in its recesses she had installed another. From 1707 onward the Queen began to hate Sarah as much as she had loved her, and to hate her the more because of the language of outworn affection and the candour of vanished friendship which still prevailed between Sovereign and subject.

1708,  
July-  
October

Marlborough remained: her general, her counsellor, at the head of Europe, by all consent the most remarkable man alive, her lifelong friend, her own triumphant choice! To Marlborough the Queen now addressed herself. She had shown herself prepared in January 1708 to let him go rather than part with Harley, and lose contact with the Tories. She had come in contact for a moment with the appalling weight of national and international force which forbade such a decision. She had submitted: she had been compelled to submit. But she bore no resentment against him. Godolphin, the Junto, Sarah, she regarded as her opponents, even as her foes; but Marlborough was still her hope, almost her last hope. He was, she still believed, the prop of her throne, the

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only man who could win the war and keep the crown on her head.

Naturally from time to time in former years letters had passed between the Queen and the Captain-General. No great number had been needed when they were agreed upon so much. But in 1708 there grew a correspondence which is little less than an epitome of British history at that time. During this hazardous, grinding campaign, both before and after Oudenarde, the Queen wrote at least a dozen lengthy letters in her own hand to Marlborough, and Marlborough at intervals perhaps half as many in reply. No one can read Anne's letters, most of which—whatever advice she got or wherever she got it from—obviously sprang from her own heart and fell pithily and passionately from her pen, without realizing across the wastes of time what a woman she was, what a prince she was, and—what a Stuart!

Marlborough's letters are also revealing. His reverence and affection for the Queen were his dominant sentiment. "I can't entirely agree with your opinion of the Queen," he wrote to Sarah. "I must own I have a tenderness for her; I would willingly believe that all that is amiss proceeds from the ambition and ill judgment of Mrs Masham, and the knavery and artfulness of Mr Harley."<sup>1</sup> But against this ran the conduct of the war, the cause of the Allies, the necessities of politics, the brutal force of faction, his loyalty to Godolphin and his own personal interests. He loathed being made to put pressure on the Queen by the impulsion of the Whigs. But he was bound in honour to Godolphin, and Sarah was in their hands. Moreover, the Whigs had both Houses of Parliament at their command, and without Parliament the armies of the Alliance, with victory almost in their grasp, would fall prostrate. Also, on the merits the Queen was utterly wrong. Her personal interventions hampered the prosecution of the war, and delayed and eventually frustrated a victorious peace. Thus we see Marlborough in his letters sometimes descending perforce below the natural and manly simplicity of his earlier corre-

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 213.

## THE HOME FRONT

spondence. He sets himself to manage the Queen, to play upon her sentiments. References to his own ill-health, to the services he had rendered her, to the risks he was running, to the drum-beats of approaching battles, none of which he would have mentioned in the days of Blenheim and Ramillies or in the earlier campaigns, creep into his letters. And always throughout them jars the threat of resignation. If he had neglected these measures, he feared that perhaps the war would be lost, and all his toils consumed for nothing.

In these years there arose in his heart an intense desire to be quit of politics. Why could he not be free from the factions, and serve at the head of the armies as a soldier? To cease to be a Minister and to remain a General was his heartfelt wish. How easy to bear were the trials and toils and hazards of war compared to this—to him hateful—pressure, the coaxing, cajoling, and coercing of the Queen for the sake of a set of men for whom he cared nothing, but that they alone could support the war! Moreover, as will be seen, he drew a very clear line between pressing the Queen on direct public issues and taking advantage of her weakness or her prejudices. He would argue with her, he would appeal to her, he would warn her; but he would not help the Whigs in their schemes to blackmail her.

At the same time Marlborough had no illusions about Anne. His eye, which measured things so exactly and pierced into the thoughts and motives of men and women, had told him the truth about the Queen. Abigail had got her. The political consequences were plain. "I do not take Mr Bromley for a great negotiator, but a less able man than himself will reconcile Lord Rochester and Mr Harley at this time. I believe you may depend upon it that they will all be of one mind, and that they think themselves assured of the hearts of the Prince and of the Queen, which is a very dismal prospect."<sup>1</sup>

In the middle of July Lord Stair arrived in London with the news of Oudenarde. Many circumstances contributed

<sup>1</sup> August 23; Coxe, iv, 201-202.

## MARLBOROUGH

to make this triumphant victory agreable to the British nation. It was the largest battle yet fought in the war. It had been fought against odds and under conditions which, according to professional opinion, were deemed unprecedented. The defeat and rout of the main army of France, reputed a hundred and twenty thousand strong, seemed to assure the future of the campaign. The hopes of a speedy and victorious peace rose high in both Whig and Tory bosoms. The accounts of the bravery of the Electoral Prince, heir presumptive to the throne, stirred all Protestant and constitutional circles, and many unfair comparisons were made between his behaviour and that of the 'pretended' Prince of Wales.

Not so did behave  
Young Hanover brave  
In the Bloody Field, I assure ye:  
When his War-Horse was shot  
He valu'd it not,  
But fought it on foot like a Fury.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

WINDSOR  
July 6/17, 1708

I want words to express ye Joy I have yt you are well after your Glorious Success, for wch next to God Almighty my thanks are due to you & indeed I can never say enough for all the great & faithfull Services you have ever don me, but be soe just as to beleeeve I am as truly Sensible of them as a gratfull hart can be, & Shall be ready to Shew it upon all occasions; I hope you can not doubt of my esteeme & freindship for you, nor think yt becaus I differ wth you in Some things, it is for want of ether; no I do assure you, if you weare heare I am Sure you would not think me Soe much in ye wrong in Some things as I feare you do now, I am affraid my letter Should Com to late to London, & therfore dare Say no more, but yt I pray God Almighty to Continue his protection over you & Send you safe home againe, & be assured I shall ever be Sincerely your humble Servant.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Jack Frenchman's Lamentations"; Jonathan Swift, *Poems*, iii, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Blenheim MSS. Printed in the *Conduitt*, pp. 215-216, in modernized form.

## THE HOME FRONT

There was a shout of triumph from all classes which for a moment, but only for a moment, drowned the clatter of faction. Marlborough's answer shows how little his judgment was affected by success. Except perhaps where Sarah was concerned, he was a man without illusions. He saw all the facts in a cool, clear, steady light. After expressing his thanks to the Queen he wrote (July 12/23) :

As I have formerly told your Majesty that I am desirous to serve you in the army, but not as a Minister, I am every day more and more confirmed in that opinion. And I think myself obliged, upon all accounts, on this occasion, to speak my mind freely to you. The circumstances in this last battle, I think, show the hand of God ; for we were obliged not only to march five leagues that morning, but to pass a river before the enemy, and to engage them before the whole army was passed, which was a visible mark of the favour of heaven, to you and your arms. Your Majesty shall be convinced from this time that I have no ambition, or anything to ask for myself or family ; but I will end the few years which I have to live in endeavouring to serve you, and to give God Almighty thanks for His infinite goodness to me.

But as I have taken this resolution to myself, give me leave to say that I think you are obliged, in conscience and as a good Christian, to forgive, and to have no more resentments to any particular person or party, but to make use of such as will carry on this just war with vigour, which is the only way to preserve our religion and liberties, and the crown on your head. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Almost while he was writing these solemn words the Queen was freeing herself from the exhilaration of Oudenarde. We have seen the letter which Marlborough had pencilled in the exhaustion after the battle to Sarah, which she had shown to the Queen. The final sentence ran : " I do, and you must, give thanks to God for His goodness in protecting and making me the instrument of so much happiness to the Queen and nation, *if she will please to make use of it.*" The chance phrase at the end nettled her ; she did not let it pass.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 182-183 ; *Conduct*, p. 258.



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### *The Queen to Marlborough*

WINDSOR  
July 13/24

... I was showed a letter the other day by a friend of yours that you writ soon after the battle, and I must beg you will explain to me one expression in it. You say, after being thankful for being the instrument of so much good to the nation and me, *if I would please to make use of it.*<sup>1</sup> I am sure I will never make an ill use of so great a blessing, but, according to the best of my understanding, make the best use of it I can, and should be glad to know what is the use you would have me make of it, and then I will tell you my thoughts very freely and sincerely.<sup>2</sup>

A week later her Majesty replied to Marlborough's restrained acknowledgment of her gracious congratulations. Her bitterness against the Whigs and fears of their encroachments were unallayed, and this time it must be admitted she had good cause. The Junto, who saw that in the winter Parliament they would be able to carry any fair-seeming project through both Houses, were determined to assert their rights. Incensed by the Queen's scornful hostility, they devised a new plan to make her yield. The reader will remember how in 1705 the Tories had, with grotesque folly, sought to vex the Queen by proposing to invite the Elector of Hanover or the Electress Sophia, or both, to England; and how serviceable the Whigs had made themselves in burking this manœuvre by their Regency Bill.<sup>3</sup> Now it was the Whigs who had recourse to this envenomed weapon with which to prod and prick their estranged Sovereign. Both their position and their case seemed overwhelming. They had the majorities; the Tories were compromised upon the point; and what could be more natural than that the young Electoral Prince, fresh from his gallant charge at Oudenarde, should pay a visit to London and receive the hearty acclamations of his future subjects?

The proposal struck the Queen far more deeply than the Whigs or almost any of her contemporaries were aware. We must remember her letter to her dying father, James II, before she assumed the crown, and the reply of Mary of

<sup>1</sup> The Queen's italics.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, IV, 184.

<sup>3</sup> P. 35.

## THE HOME FRONT

Modena.<sup>1</sup> Anne had compromised with her conscience on the grounds that her duty to the Church of England compelled her to ascend the throne, lest chaos engulfed both Church and State.

Thus she had reigned, praying always for a son who would assure her of the blessing of heaven and prolong her line. But this hope was now extinct. Her husband was seriously ill with an affection of the chest which grew as the summer passed; and she herself knew she could hardly expect another pregnancy. Henceforward increasingly, the Act of Settlement notwithstanding, the Queen found comfort in the dream that her brother would succeed her. Bound as she was hand and foot by the laws, the Parliament, and the nation, she might not attempt to aid such restoration. Sarah, with her Whig prejudices and rough common sense, did not attach sufficient importance to this mood. But Godolphin and Marlborough knew and understood. They were vigilant and picked their steps with care. Indeed, this sentiment—it was no more than a sentiment—was a secret bond which still united them to the Queen. They knew that Anne would never tolerate the presence of any representative of the house of Hanover in the island while she drew breath. The Whigs, without realizing how sensitive was the spot upon which they directed their thrust, had nevertheless a pretty plain notion that this was a deadly and at the same time a practical method of pressure or revenge. Accordingly it had been put about, and whispered to the Queen by Abigail, that Marlborough liked the idea of bringing the young Electoral Prince back to England after the campaign.<sup>2</sup> When this rumour gained some currency the Whig Lords exposed what they designed when Parliament

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> "All the letters from Hanover say positively the Electoral Prince is to make the campaign under the Duke of Marlborough, though our prints do not mention it, and I think it may be observed that our news writers are more cautious what they say in relation to that family than on any other subject. I am further told that the Duke will next winter bring him or his grandmother over hither, in such a manner that they shall have the obligation neither to Whigs or Tories, but entirely to himself and Lord Treasurer; whether they will think fit to communicate it to the Queen I cannot tell."—E. Lewis to Harley, May 22, 1708; Portland Papers, *H.M.C.*, iv, 490.

## MARLBOROUGH

met. They made through Sunderland, and perhaps through Sarah, every promise of active support for Marlborough, for Godolphin, and for the war, if only Marlborough would join with them in this push. Lord Haversham in the Tory interest waited upon the Queen and exposed the intrigue. Anne now wrote again to Marlborough a letter which certainly did not shirk the issue.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

WINDSOR

July 22/August 2, 1708

For tho' you say you will serve me as general, but not as a Minister, I shall always look upon you as both, and never separate those two characters, but ask your advice in both capacities on all occasions. You seem to waive giving any answer to these two letters I have mentioned, and, after answering my sincere congratulations on your last glorious success, you tell me you think I am obliged in good conscience as a good Christian to forgive and forget all resentments I may have to any particular person or party. I thank God I do forgive all my enemies with all my heart, but it is wholly impossible in human nature to forget people's behaviour in things so fresh in one's memory so far as to have a good opinion of them, especially when one sees for all their professions they are still pursuing the same measures, and you may depend upon it they will always do so, *for there is no washing a Blackamoor white*. I am truly sensible and thankful for God Almighty's Great Goodness showered on your head and mine, and hope He will give me grace never to make an ill use of his Signal Blessings, but I can never be convinced that Christianity requires me, nor that it can be for my service to put myself entirely into the hands of any one party.<sup>1</sup>

She then described how Lord Haversham had warned her of the Whig plan.

What I have to say upon this subject, at this time, is to beg you would find whether there is any design where you are, that the young man should make a visit in the winter ; and contrive some way to put such thought out of his head, that the difficulty may not be brought upon me of refusing him leave to come, if he should ask it, or forbidding him to come, if he should attempt it ; for one of these two things I must do, if either he or his

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough Papers, H.M.C., p. 42.

## THE HOME FRONT

father should have any desires to have him see this country, it being a thing I cannot bear, to have any successor here, though but for a week.<sup>1</sup>

We have no record of any reply of Marlborough's to the Queen upon this issue. But it is certain that he refused to give the Whigs the slightest countenance upon it. He had never favoured the visit of the Electoral Prince; indeed, he had expressed surprise that his father, the Elector, should wish him to serve with the main army in Flanders instead of on the Rhine. He explained himself clearly to Sarah.

### *John to Sarah*

[Some time in July]

. . . In the first place, you may depend upon my joining with the Whigs, in opposition to the Tories, in all things; but as to the invitation, or what else may be personal to the Queen, in regard to myself, as well as concern for her, I must never do any thing that looks like flying in her face. But as to everything else, I shall always be ready to join with the Whigs, in opposition to the Tories, for whom I shall have no reserve. . . . I must be master of my own actions, which may concern the Queen personally . . . You judge very right of the Queen, that nothing will go so near her heart as that of the invitation. I think the project very dangerous; I wish the Whigs would think well of it, but I am at too great a distance to be advising. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Marlborough wrote (August 2) in the form of a grave protest and warning a general reply to the Queen's letters both before and after the battle.

He complained of his treatment at her hands. "The uneasiness of my mind, upon receiving your Majesty's letters of the 18th and 22nd of June, had such an effect upon my body as to make me very ill, till it pleased God to bless me with such good success, as in great measure recovered me."<sup>3</sup>

He reproached her about Sunderland.

Though he may have done what your Majesty does not like, I did flatter myself nobody could have prevailed with you, to carry your resentment so far against him in my absence as

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 194-195.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-197.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

## MARLBOROUGH

is mentioned in your letters, and to give me so great a mortification in the face of all Europe, at a time when I was so zealously endeavouring to serve you at the hazard both of my reputation and of my blood.

. . . For God's sake, madam, consider that, whatever may be said to amuse or delude you, it is utterly impossible for you ever to have more than a part of the Tories ; and though you could have them all, their number is not capable of doing you good. These things are so plain that I can't doubt but your Majesty will be convinced nothing can be so fatal to your service as any way to discourage the Whigs at this time, when after the blessing of this victory you may be sure that if you show a confidence in their zeal for your interests, they will all concur very cheerfully to make you great and happy, as I wish. God Almighty bless and preserve you.

He then explained and justified in a very plain manner the phrase that had ruffled the Queen.

Your Majesty might see by the shortness of the letter that was shown you that I was in great haste when I writ it, and my fulness of heart for your service made me use that expression. What I then meant, as I must always think, is that you can make no good use of this victory, nor of any other blessing, but by following the advice of my Lord Treasurer, who has been so long faithful to you ; for any other advisers do but lead you into a labyrinth, to play their own game at your expense. Nothing but your commands should have obliged me to say so much, having taken my resolution to suffer with you, but not to advise, being sensible that if there was not something very extraordinary, your Majesty would follow the advice of those that have served you so long, faithfully, and with success.<sup>1</sup>

To Sarah he wrote (August 6) :

. . . The account you give me of the commerce and kindness of the Queen to Mrs Masham is that which will at last bring all things to ruin ; for by all you write I see the Queen is determined to support, and, I believe, at last own her. I am of the opinion I ever was of, that the Queen will not be made sensible, or frightened out of this passion ; but I can't but think some ways might be found to make Mrs Masham very much afraid. The

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 187-188.

## THE HOME FRONT

discovery you have made of the Queen's having the opinion that she has friends which will support her can be no other than the Tories ; and it is true they would ruin Lord Treasurer and me, and will be able to bring it about, if it can be thought ruin to be put in the condition of quietness, which of all things I wish for. . . . The temper of England is such that nobody in any great station can be liked ; for if they are lucky, they do not make use enough of their advantage ; if unfortunate, they run the risk of being called fools and traitors. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Nothing moved the Queen. She defended herself obdurately from the suggestion that she had other advisers than her Ministers. She was conscious that she could hardly expect Marlborough to believe her. But she made no concession.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

[Undated]

I received yours of the 2/13th of this month on Saturday last, which was in answer to three of mine. I am very sorry to find you persist in your resolution of not advising me concerning my home affairs ; but I would beg your pardon for disobeying your commands in that particular, it being impossible for me, who have on all occasions spoke and writ my mind very freely, as I think every friend ought to do to one another, to forbear doing the same still, and asking your opinion in everything ; there being nobody but you and Lord Treasurer that I do advise with, nor can rely on, which I will yet hope you will believe, since I tell you so, you having more than once or twice assured me you would credit what I said. Though I must confess, by what I am told every day of my being influenced by Mr Harley, through a relation of his, and your saying you are sensible that if there were not something very extraordinary, I should follow the advice of Lord Treasurer and you, I fear you have not a thorough good opinion of me, and if that be so, it is in vain for me to say anything. However, I can't help asking why my not complying with some things that are desired, and which you know I have ever been against, should be imputed to something extraordinary ? Is not one body of one opinion, and *one of another* ?<sup>2</sup> and why then should it be wonderful that you and I should differ in some things, as well as other people, especially since my

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 191-193.

<sup>2</sup> The Queen's italics.

## MARLBOROUGH

thoughts are the same of the Whigs that ever they were from the time that ever I have been capable of having notions of things and people; and I must own I can see no reason to alter mine.<sup>1</sup>

This response to his remonstrance made the worst impression upon Marlborough. It "has thoroughly convinced me," he wrote to Sarah (August 9), using with asperity one of the Queen's phrases,

*that there is no washing a blackamoor white*, and that we must expect this next winter all the disagreeableness imaginable; for the Tories have got the heart and entire possession of the Queen, which they will be able to maintain as long as Mrs Masham has credit.

But he added loyally :

I do earnestly beg, when Mr Montgomery has read Mrs Morley's letter and this of mine to you, that they may both be torn to pieces, so that they may never hurt Mrs Morley, whom I can't but love, and endeavour to serve, as long as I have life; for I know this is not her fault, otherwise than by being too fond of Mrs Masham, who imposes upon her.<sup>2</sup>

*John to Sarah*

*August [9]/20*

. . . I am doing my best to serve England and the Queen, and, with all my heart and soul, I pray for God's protection and blessing; but I am so tired of what I hear, and what I think must happen in England, that I am every day confirmed that I should be wanting to myself, and ungrateful to God Almighty, if I did not take the first occasion that can be practicable to retire from business. And as I have for several years served my Queen and country with all my heart, so I should be glad to have some time to recollect and be grateful for the many mercies I have received from the hand of God. I would not live like a monk, but I can't with patience think of continuing much longer in business, having it not in my power to persuade that to be done, which I think is right. I foresee the difficulty of retiring during the war, which is my greatest trouble at this time; but even that difficulty must be overcome, if I must be

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 189-190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-194.

## THE HOME FRONT

in some manner answerable for the notions of the Queen, who is in no ways governed by anything I can say or do. God knows who it is that influences ; but as I love her and my country, I dread the consequences. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Queen Anne had received the news of Oudenarde in the little house she had occupied at Windsor to nurse her poor prince. Her instinctive comment reveals her mood to the depths: "Oh, Lord, when will all this dreadful bloodshed cease?"<sup>2</sup> But now it was the day of thanksgiving for the victory. The Queen left her ailing husband's couch, and journeyed to St James's to be robed for her progress to St Paul's. It was Sarah's duty to lay out the jewels she was to wear. We may be sure that the Duchess, full of the victory, discharged her duty punctiliously. She, the wife of the victor-general, her idolized "Lord Marl," would drive by the Queen's side through the cheering crowds to St Paul's Cathedral, and receive on her husband's behalf a British triumph. Suddenly she perceived that the Queen was not wearing the jewels her Mistress of the Robes had selected, or, according to some authorities, any jewels at all. Instantly Sarah saw the hand of the hated Abigail. It was not only feminine anger which stirred her. Sarah was also a politician. She knew well that these jewels, or no jewels, would be the talk of every Court in Europe. All the ambassadors who now crowded in the greatest state upon the once-neglected Court of St James's would write that night the story of Marlborough's failing favour. For weeks thereafter statesmen, diplomats, commanders, princes, would shake their heads or grin upon it.

As they rode along through the joyful streets she reproached the Queen for wounding her upon Lord Marlborough's festival. No one knows what the two women said to one another in the coach. They had more than thirty years of intimacy, most of it joyous intimacy, behind them. But Anne was Queen, and extremely capable of making her will felt. Probably very few interchanges passed between them. But at the top of the steps of St Paul's, at the entry where all the functionaries were arrayed, the Queen began to

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 209.

<sup>2</sup> N. Tindal, *Continuation of Rapin's History*, iv, 104.



## MARLBOROUGH

speak with warmth, and Sarah said, "Be quiet—not here," or words to that effect. The courtiers and dignitaries gaped and stared, and Queen Anne and the Duchess of Marlborough proceeded to offer their thanks to Almighty God for having blessed the arms of Britain with the timely and glorious victory of Oudenarde.

It may well be that not one word was spoken by either the Queen or Sarah on the return journey from this somewhat grim celebration. An adherent of Harley's wrote to him :

The solemnity of the day has been performed with a great deal of decency, but I cannot say with any visible marks of real joy and satisfaction. There were very few people in the windows and balconies, and it was to be read in everybody's countenance that they looked upon the giving of thanks for a victory at Oudenarde to be a mocking of God. However, the men in office acted their parts, and put on their wedding garments.<sup>1</sup>

This is a jaundiced account. But we must remember that it was the seventh year of the war, and that in twenty years there had only been three years of peace.

Sarah, upon the return to St James's, was conscious that something had happened. Evidently she thought the best course was to pass it off by going on with the interrupted argument. A day or two later she wrote :

I cannot help sending your Majesty this letter,<sup>2</sup> to show how exactly Lord Marlborough agrees with me in my opinion, that he has now no interest with you : though when I said so in church on Thursday, you were pleased to say it was untrue. And yet I think he will be surprised to hear that when I had taken so much pains to put your jewels in a way that I thought you would like, Mrs Masham could make you refuse to wear them in so unkind a manner, because that was a power she had not thought fit to exercise before. I will make no reflections upon it ; only that I must needs observe that your Majesty chose a very wrong day to mortify me, when you were just going to return thanks for a victory obtained by Lord Marlborough.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. Lewis to Robert Harley, August 19, 1708 ; Portland Papers, *H.M.C.*, iv, 501.

<sup>2</sup> Printed at p. 467.

<sup>3</sup> *Conduct*, pp. 260-261.

## THE HOME FRONT

Anne's reply was freezing :

*Sunday [August 22/September 2, 1708]*

After the commands you gave me in the church, on the thanksgiving, of not answering you, I should not have troubled you with these lines, but to return the Duke of Marlborough's letter safe into your hands, and for the same reason do not say anything to that, nor to yours which enclosed it.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah was not disposed to relinquish her right, so long enjoyed, of free discussion with the Queen. Her answer yielded nothing, and does her no discredit. It was also utterly futile for any purpose she sought to serve.

*Sarah to the Queen*

[Undated]

I should not trouble your Majesty with any answer to your last short letter, but to explain what you seem to mistake in what I said at church. I desired you not to answer me there for fear of being overheard : and this you interpret as if I had desired you not to answer me at all ; which was far from my intention. . . . I should be much better pleased to say and do everything you like. But I should think myself wanting in my duty to you if I saw you so much in the wrong as, without prejudice or passion, I really think you are in several particulars I have mentioned, and did not tell you of it. And the rather because nobody else cares to speak out upon so ungrateful a subject. The word *command*, which you use at the beginning of your letter, is very unfitly supposed to come from me. For though I have always writ to you as a friend, and lived with you as such for so many years with all the truth and honesty and zeal for your service that was possible, yet I shall never forget that I am your subject, nor cease to be a faithful one.<sup>2</sup>

Her sincerity and a certain broad justice in her complaint drew from Anne a further reply :

*Tuesday evening*

. . . I shall only just touch upon two things, the first as to what you say that it shows plainly by what the Duke of Marlborough says in the end of your letter he thinks he has not much credit

<sup>1</sup> *Conduct*, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262-263.

## MARLBOROUGH

with me ; to this I answer I am of opinion, and so I believe all impartial people must be, that I have all my life given demonstration to the world he has a great deal of credit with me. The other is to beg you would not mention that person any more who you are pleased to call the object of my favour, for whatever character the malicious world may give her, I do assure you it will never have any weight with me, knowing she does not deserve it, nor I can never change the good impressions you once gave me of her, unless she should give me a cause, which I am very sure she never will. I have nothing further to trouble my dear Mrs Freeman with at this time, but that whatever opinion she may have of me, I will never deserve any that is ill, but will always be her faithful Morley.<sup>1</sup>

Some may think that even at this hour Sarah could have saved some way of living with the Queen in decorum and even amity. She would have had to drop politics, smile upon Abigail, and discharge her Court duties with kindly, cool detachment. She could never have done it. The best and the worst of her was her candour and blunt common sense. Anne, apart from her sovereign authority, had immense powers of reserve and dissimulation. Sarah resembled in some respects the kind of woman we are familiar with in the public and social agitations of our own day. But no personal accommodation could alter the antagonism. Behind the Queen lurked Harley, the Tories, and Peace. Behind Sarah stood Marlborough, the Whigs, the Grand Alliance, and the War ; and against them all, still magnificent and seemingly inexhaustible—France.

### *John to Sarah*

*August [12]/23*

You say Mrs Morley has taken no notice of your letter. I think that is a true sign she is angry. There being three or four posts come from England since she has received Mr Freeman's last letter, I take it for granted the same method will be taken of giving no answer. I am in no ways dissatisfied at that manner of proceeding, for till the Queen changes her humour and resolutions, the less the conversations are the better. . . . I should never

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough Papers, H.M.C., p 52



SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH, IN 1708  
Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*By permission of Earl Spencer*



## THE HOME FRONT

trouble the Queen with any of my letters, but that I can't refuse Lord Treasurer and you, when you desire anything of me.

Marlborough had at this time in fact become almost indifferent to the political scene. In the next chapter we shall see what he was facing in the field.

I am sure that the interest of Mrs Masham is so settled with the Queen that we only trouble ourselves to no purpose; and by endeavouring to hurt, we do good-offices to her; so that in my opinion we ought to be careful of our own actions, and not lay everything to heart, but submit to whatever may happen.<sup>1</sup>

This continued to be his sage opinion. "I am glad," he reiterated to Sarah (September 17), "that you have taken the resolution of being quiet; for you are certainly in the right, that whatever is said or writ by you, the Lord Treasurer, and me, serves only for information to do hurt."<sup>2</sup> And (October 1), "For the resolution you have taken of neither speaking nor writing is so certainly right that I dare assure you that you will find a good effect of it in one month."<sup>3</sup>

Neither the Queen, nor Harley in the background, was prepared at this moment of all others to face the consequences of Marlborough's or even Godolphin's resignation. The country was still ringing with the Whig triumph at the polls. The new Parliament, in which the Whigs must be supreme, was to meet in a few months. What madness to provoke a constitutional crisis! Marlborough, however treated by the Tories, would defend the Queen's throne against the Whigs and all comers. But Harley could feel no such assurance that the same defence would be forthcoming for his interests or even his head. Patience! Accordingly Anne appealed vehemently to Marlborough not to resign.

### *The Queen to Marlborough*

[Undated, but endorsed by the Duchess August 27]

I am sorry to find you in such a splenetic way as to talk of retiring, it being a thing I can never consent to, and what your

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 201-202.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

## MARLBOROUGH

country, nor your truly faithful friends can never think right, whatever melancholy thoughts they may have all this time. Besides, in my poor opinion, when after all the glorious successes God Almighty has blessed you with He is pleased to make you the happy instrument of giving a lasting peace to Europe, you are bound in conscience, both to God and man, to lend your helping hand; and how can you do that if you retire from business? You may be as grateful to God Almighty in a public station as in a private one; but I do not wonder at your desiring quiet, after all the fatigues and vexations you go through daily; for it is certainly the most valuable blessing in this world, and what every one would choose, I believe, that has ever had anything to do in business, if there were nothing to be considered but one's self.

Lord Treasurer talks of retiring too, and told me, not many days ago, he would do all he could to serve me, by advising with people, and settling a scheme for the carrying on my business in the Parliament, before he went to Newmarket; but that he would not come back from thence. I told him that must not be, that he could not answer it either to God or himself; and I hope you will both consider better of it, and not do an action that will bring me and your country into confusion. Is there no consideration to be had for either? You may flatter yourselves that people will approve of your quitting; but if you should persist in these cruel and unjust resolutions, believe me, where one will say you are in the right, hundreds will blame you.

She proceeded to restate her own position. The Whigs, she declared, were "disputing her authority, certainly designing," when the new Parliament meet, "to tear that little prerogative the Crown has to pieces," and "have none in any employment that does not entirely depend upon them." "Now, how is it possible," demanded the Queen, closing her eyes to Parliamentary majorities, "when one knows and sees all these things, as plainly as the sun at noonday, ever to take these people into my bosom?"

For God's sake [her letter ran], do but make it your own case, and consider then what you would do, and why a handful of men must awe their fellow-subjects. There is nobody more desirous than I to encourage those Whig friends that behave themselves

## THE HOME FRONT

well; but I do not care to have anything to do with those that have shown themselves to be of so tyrannizing a temper; and not to run on farther on those subjects, to be short, I think things are come to, whether I shall submit to the five tyrannizing lords or they to me. This is my poor opinion on the disputes at present, which could not be, if people would weigh and state the case just as it is, without partiality on one side or the other, which I beg, for the friendship you have ever professed for me, you would do; and let me know your thoughts of what may be the best expedient, to keep me from being thrown into the hands of the five lords.<sup>1</sup>

But what possibility was there of denying office to a great party, newly placed by the constituencies in control of both Houses of Parliament? To do so was to strain the Constitution, even as then interpreted. Nor would another Dissolution have been effective. It would have been a violent abuse of the Prerogative; and there was no reason to suppose a different answer would be given by the electors.

Marlborough's reply could not therefore offer the slightest prospect of any agreement with the Queen. On the contrary, he seems to have been at pain to set the differences forth in terms as blunt and hard as any which an English sovereign ever received from a loyal servant.

*Marlborough to the Queen*

[Undated] 1708

As to the reflections your Majesty is pleased to make upon my real inclinations to retire, tho' it be very natural and very desirable, after one has lived a great many years in a hurry, to enjoy some quiet in one's old age; yet I will own freely to your Majesty, my inclinations to retire proceed chiefly from finding myself incapable of being of any further use to your Majesty. The long and faithful services I have endeavoured to perform to your Majesty, and the goodness you had expressed to me upon several occasions, had created a general opinion, both abroad and at home, that your Majesty placed entire trust and confidence in me; and upon that foot I was the more capable of doing many great and effectual services, both here abroad and in England. But your Majesty will give me leave to say, with all imaginable duty, that is now reduced singly to serving you at the head of

<sup>1</sup> Coxé, iv, 202-205.



## MARLBOROUGH

the army this campaign; for your Majesty, having shown so publicly last winter and this spring that you have no more trust and confidence in me, nor any reliance upon my opinion, but much more upon the opinion of those who have neither honesty nor capacity to serve you, and who visibly ruined your service last winter in several undeniable instances, it is no longer possible for me to be of any further use to you; and to continue in your council to advise, without credit enough to prevail with you to follow good advice, would only expose myself and my reputation in the world, by making myself answerable for other people's follies, or worse.

And by what your Majesty is pleased to say in your letter of the Lord Treasurer, tho' I have nothing so far as that from himself, I believe his opinion, and his reasons for that opinion, must be the same with mine. Your Majesty is pleased to think we shall be blamed for quitting; but, not to reflect upon that coldness, and that behaviour in yourself which forces us to quit, by withdrawing your trust and confidence from us, to give it to insinuating, busy flatterers, who can't serve you one month this winter *without danger of being torn in pieces in the streets*. I don't doubt but these things are very sensible to the Lord Treasurer, as I am sure they are to me. However, I shall not trouble your Majesty any farther with the consequences that must follow, since I find plainly by your Majesty's letter that all I have said and written hitherto is to no purpose, nor, indeed, ever can be, while your Majesty's heart is possessed by all the false and malicious insinuations which are possible to be suggested by our enemies; and therefore I shall conclude this head with wishing your Majesty may find abler servants than we have been; more faithful and affectionate, I will beg leave to say, you never can.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the melancholy and dissolving background at home upon which Marlborough had to conduct the greatest siege of the eighteenth century while surrounded by superior French armies. It is only by surveying the double set of pressures and cares weighing upon him that his fortitude of spirit and tenacity of purpose can be judged.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 205-208.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE SIEGE OF LILLE

AFTER Paris Lille, the capital of French Flanders, was the greatest city of France. It was almost the earliest, and certainly the most splendid fruit of Louis XIV's lifelong aggressions. For forty years it had been the monument of his military fame. It was also the staple of all the trade between the Netherlands and France. Its wealthy merchants financed and profited by the privateering from Dunkirk. Its name, Lisle, sprang from its secure position amid the pools and swamps of the Deule. Since the most ancient times it had been a stronghold and refuge. All the art of Vauban, unhurried by time, unstinted in expense, had been devoted to the fortifications. Broad double moats filled with water, massive masonry of covered ways and galleries, surmounted by enormous earthworks armed with heavy cannon, and an intricate system of outer defences made the town itself as strong as a citadel. But, besides the fortifications of the town, a large and wholly independent pentagon-shaped fortress afforded the garrison the means of standing what was virtually a second siege. These defences would have been formidable in the last degree if manned only by six or seven thousand troops. But Berwick, with the King's cordial agreement, concentrated a miniature army of fifteen thousand men within them, including twenty-one battalions; and Marshal Boufflers, Marlborough's old comrade of Maestricht days, had claimed the honour of commanding the resistance. It was evident that Lille would be the greatest siege operation since the invention of gunpowder. All Europe watched with wonder what seemed to those times a prodigy of human effort. That it should be undertaken by armies inferior in numbers to the French forces actually in the field, whose water communications were cut by fortresses

1708,  
August-  
September

## MARLBOROUGH

in their rear, whose road communications seemed to lie at the mercy of Vendôme and Berwick, constituted an act of temerity only possible when allied to the authority and fame of Marlborough and Eugene. Vendôme, among his many miscalculations of 1708, declared that "so wise a commander as Prince Eugene would not venture upon such an enterprise," and the French Court boasted that "without striking a blow they would oblige the Allies to abandon the siege."

All these facts are cited by historians to extol the indomitable firmness of the Allies in choosing such a trial of strength. They were, indeed, the very reasons which had made Marlborough earnest to find some other course. Compared with the perils of the siege of Lille and the limited objects obtainable by its capture, the hazards of a new sea-base and of a march to Paris seemed attractive. Thus in our own time we have seen the minds of men and all resources absorbed by the great offensives on the Western Front which were driven forward on both sides regardless of bloodshed or any other exhaustion of war-power, while the dangerous prudence of conventional opinion prevented unexpected and so-called eccentric alternatives. Nevertheless, Marlborough, anticipating Lord Kitchener's dictum, "One cannot wage war as one ought, but only as one can," addressed himself with zeal and confidence to the inevitable step. He was glad to welcome in his camp as spectators and volunteers King Augustus of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel. Marlborough entertained—we trust not too parsimoniously—King Augustus at his quarters, and no doubt his silver plate and the massive wine-coolers were displayed at several unavoidable feasts. The Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel lived with his son, who was one of Marlborough's most active generals.

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

HELCHIN  
August 13

You will know by this post that our cannon is arrived safely at Menin, and that I have reinforced Prince Eugene's army with thirty-one battalions and thirty-four squadrons. That, with the detachments we have made for Flanders and Brussels, makes

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

this army to consist only of 140 squadrons and sixty-nine battalions, with which I am to observe the motions of the Duke of Burgundy's army. That of Prince Eugene is for the siege, and observation of the Duke of Berwick. Prince Eugene's army consists of ninety squadrons and fifty-three battalions, by which you will see that when we join, which I believe we shall do, the whole will be 230 squadrons and 122 battalions. This day Lille is invested ; I pray God to bless the undertaking. What I most fear is the want of powder and ball for so great an undertaking, for our engineers fear we must take the town before we can attack the citadel.<sup>1</sup>

*John to Sarah*

HELCHIN

*August 16*

. . . The siege of Lille, which was begun on Monday last, is of that consequence to France that I nowise doubt of their drawing all the troops that is in their power together, to give us what disturbance they can. I pray God to bless this undertaking, and all others that may tend to the bringing of us to a safe and lasting peace, and then I will not put the visit of Lord Haversham to Abigail much to heart. . . .

But I think we are now acting for the liberties of all Europe, so that, . . . tho' I love the Queen with all my heart, I can't think of the business of England till this great affair is decided, which I think must be by another battle ; for I am resolved to risk rather than suffer Brussels to be taken, tho' the number of this army is very much diminished by the siege. But I rely on the justness of our cause, and that God will not forsake us, and that He will continue to keep our troops in good heart, as they are at present. I beg you to be so kind and just as to be assured that my kindness for you is such that my greatest ambition is bounded in that of ending my days quietly with you.<sup>2</sup>

The Great King was vehemently stirred by the siege of Lille. Like Vendôme, he had not believed it would be begun. He was resolved that it should be prevented. He ordered that Marshal, and, of course, Burgundy, not to hesitate to fight a decisive battle to relieve the city. Weariness of war lay

<sup>1</sup> Coxé, IV, 222.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199

## MARLBOROUGH

heavy upon this old monarch. For more than forty years he had been the scourge of Europe. But war had lost its glamour with its laurels. One final, supreme battle to rescue Lille or lose the war; and then peace—peace now become dear and precious even on the worst terms. Such was his mood. But the French army and its generals, with the doubtful exception of Vendôme, whose conduct we shall examine later, did not find it so easy to court such dire decisions. They still felt the mauling of Oudenarde. Marlborough judged the facts with perfect accuracy. The siege was a grave hazard and might fail, thus spoiling the campaign, but that the enemy would fight a decisive battle for its relief was too good to be true. Only one movement would force a decisive battle—the march on Paris. That the army he commanded would win any pitched battle he was sure; but he did not think it probable that any decisive result would be reached in the field in 1708.

### *John to Sarah*

*Augt. 13th, 1708*

\* I have had none of Yours since my last, so that I have no answers to any of Yours which will make my letter the shorter. Our canon being arriv'd in safety we are divid'd in two Armes, that of Pr. Eugene is to invest Lisle this day, I am to observe as well as I can the motions of the Duke of Vandoms Army. If his designe shou'd be on Bruxelles, he has it in his power of being there 2 days before me, but we having ten Redgts in it, if he has not intelligence in the place, I hope to come time enough for the relief of it; but the truth is that 116 [the Dutch] has been so very insolent, that we have generally the people against us, which att this time creates great difficultys. I cou'd struggle with all this knowing as I think the worst of itt, but that which gives me the greatest concern is, the prospect we have in 108 [England] for by the enclos'd letter I sent you by the last post, it appears plainly to me that 239 [the Queen] is determined to do everything that will hurt themselves, which will have the consequences of hurting everybody, and everything; I have this evening Yours of the 27th and thank you for the Verses which I think very good; I shou'd have been glad to have known the author.

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

He added a comic touch. "I have read in a news paper that the Queen had given mr. Harley myself and severall others our Plate, I suppose it is not treu since you do not mention itt."<sup>1</sup> Actually Harley had been called upon by the Attorney-General to restore the plate furnished him for his official use during his tenure as Secretary of State. He had made difficulty about this, alleging his poverty; and the Queen was disposed to make him a gift of it. But the question arose, Should this principle be applied to other office-holders? Marlborough, at grips with the Queen, and in all the stresses of the campaign, was at once attentive to this. Anything in the nature of a perquisite stirred him, and gave him real pleasure even in his most magnificent exertions, and under his most wearing ordeals.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

HELCHIN  
August 20

By the threatening of M. de Vendôme I did not think we should have continued thus long in this camp; but as yet he is not marched from behind the canal. But the Duke of Berwick is drawing to his army, with all the troops he can, from their several towns. M. de Vendôme declares in his army that he has *carte blanche*, and that he will attempt the relief of Lille; that when the Duke of Berwick joins him, they shall then have 135 battalions and 260 squadrons, which he flatters himself will be much stronger than we can be. If we have a second action, and God blesses our just cause, this, in all likelihood, will be the last campaign; for I think they would not venture a battle, but that they are resolved to submit to any condition, if the success be on our side. . . . If God continues on our side, we have nothing to fear, our troops being good, though not so numerous as theirs. I dare say, before half the troops have fought, the success will declare, I hope in God on our side, and then I may have, what I earnestly wish for, quiet; and you may be much more at ease than when you writ yours of the 31st of the last month, which I received yesterday.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the siege is set out fully with many striking anecdotes by Lediard, to whom full reference should be

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, iv, 223.

## MARLBOROUGH

made. The attack was delivered from the north. Prince Eugene commanded the fifty battalions, of whom ten were always in the trenches which were assigned to the task. Of these thirty were provided from Marlborough's army. Lines of circumvallation were drawn, and the work of mounting the batteries began. The youthful Prince of Orange, who commanded the sector of assault, fixed his headquarters in close shot of the Lille artillery. His house was pierced by several cannon-balls, and when on the morning of the 18th he was being dressed for his duties a round shot, passing over his shoulder, smashed his valet's head and "besmeared his clothes and face with blood and brains." He was thereupon persuaded to find a safer abode. As it was known that not only the ramparts but the town was to be bombarded, a large number of ladies sought permission to leave the dangerous area. Prince Eugene chivalrously accorded them facilities; but his engineer officers, disguised as common soldiers among the troops who received them, were able to study the approach to the St Mark and St Magdalen gates, which were the selected points of attack. Two immense hornworks protected these entrances, and were the main defences of the northern side.

The magistrates of Lille, by Boufflers' leave, sent a deputation "with compliments and refreshments" to Prince Eugene, appealing to him to spare the burghers as much as possible. But he answered

that a besieged town ought to be kept very close; so that he could not yet admit of their civilities; but when he should be master of the place, the burghers might be assured of his protection, provided he should be satisfied that they had endeavoured to deserve it, by their impartial carriage during the siege.<sup>1</sup>

So strong was the garrison that fierce fighting developed upon the approaches. The chapel of St Magdalen and the neighbouring mill were scenes of carnage. However, on the 21st the lines of contravallation and circumvallation were perfected. Thus Eugene and his besiegers dwelt in a double

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 308.

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

ring of earthworks several hundred yards apart and nine miles in length, facing outward and inward around the city, and Marlborough with the field army protected them from interference. Trenches were opened on the 22nd, and five days later the heavy batteries began to play with eighty-eight pieces. The object of this process in a siege was to shatter the masonry and crumble the earthworks, so that as they fell in ruins they filled up the moats, and made a breach in which hand-to-hand fighting proceeded till the moment of assault was ripe. The large cannon-balls of those days and primitive shells from the mortars, after a certain number of days of firing, which could usually be accurately estimated, were capable of producing such a result. But all depended upon the powder and ball. By the early days of September deserters reported that the breach was very wide, that the ditch was almost full with the ruins of the wall, and that Marshal Bouffiers had ordered a good part of his best cannon to be withdrawn from the ramparts into the citadel. The assault of the counterscarp was accordingly fixed for the 7th. But now the French grand army, united with that of Marshal Berwick, arrived upon the scene.

### *John to Sarah*

CAMP AT AMOUGIES  
August 27, 1708

\* I begin to write to my dear soull early this morning beleiving I may be oblig'd to march, so that I shou'd not have time in this afternoon; for if the intelligence I receiv'd an hour ago that the Duke of Vandomes Army as well as that of the Duke of Berwick were on their march to join be true, I must march. Our canon began this morning to fyre at Lisle, so that in ten days we hope to have the town, and after that we must attack the citadel, which we think will give us full as much trouble, My hopes are that God will bless us, in this undertaking which will very much forward my being at quiet with You, especially if we have another success against the Duke of Burgundy who has the King of france's possitive orders to ventur every thing rather then suffer Lisle to be taken.

We have for these last ten days had extreame hott weather,



## MARLBOROUGH

which I hope may give You good peaches att Woodstock, wher I shou'd be better pleas'd to eat even the worst that were ever tasted, then the good ons we have here, for every day of my life I grow more impatient for quiet ; having writte thus farr I have notice that Monsr de Vandome has begone his march, in order to camp this night at Gavre, which is not above one league and a half from Gand, so that I shall not march til to morrow, when I shall be more certainly inform'd of his intentions. I intend to stop the post til then, so that if there be any thing new, I may writt itt.

By the slow motions of Monsr de Vandome it lookes as if he resolv'd not to march to join the Duke of Berwick, but to make that Duke march his Army to Gramont where thay will then join.<sup>1</sup> This is exactly what they did.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

. . . When we are once masters of the town, we shall have no occasion for so great a circumvallation, by which the army will be much stronger; so that if the enemy will venture, it must be before we take the town. Our troops are in good heart, and their foot in a bad condition. They are, in horse, stronger than we, but upon the whole I cannot think they will venture a battle, though it is said they have positive orders to succour the place. . . .

As I am now posted, it is impossible for him to get between me and the siege; and I have taken such measures with Prince Eugene, for the strengthening each other, that I no ways doubt of preventing anything they may flatter themselves with. . . .

As to point of time, it is equal to us whether the Duke of Vendôme marches by Mons, or obliges the Duke of Berwick to make the tour of Brabant. One day will inform us of his resolutions. . . .<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to reassure Sarah he forecasted with perfect comprehension the future action of the enemy. His power of putting himself in the enemy's shoes, and measuring truly what they ought to do, and what he himself would most dislike, was one of his greatest gifts. He was only wrong in his anticipations when the enemy made a mistake. But this also had compensations of its own.

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

<sup>2</sup> COXE, IV, 226-228,

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

PÉRONNE <sup>1</sup>

September 3, 1708

\* I have receiv'd the pleasur of Your three letters of the 6. 7. and 13th with copies of those You write, and receiv'd from mrs Morley . . . I shall not answer mrs Morleys til I see the success of this siege, which goes much slower than were to be wish'd, when I came into this Campe last Saturday I imeditely went to Pr. Eugene, where I found the Siege at least six days backward then I was made to beleive by my letters, so that mr. Craggs <sup>2</sup> wagers in all likelywhode will be lost ; Pr. Eugene dined with me yesterday, and we have mark'd a Camp, where we are resolved to receive the ffrrench if thay will make their threats good ; *the post we have chose I think to be so very much for our advantage, that I am confident You may be at ease, that the ffrrench with the blessing of God will be beatten, which makes me think thay must be mad if thay ventur itt ; I beleive their greatest application will be the endeavouring to starve us ;* thay having already in the King of ffrances name forbid on pain of death for any of his subjects to bring us any provisions, *this is the greatest hurt I think thay can do us, but I hope we shall be able to struggle with itt ;* yours of the 17th I had last night, by which I find Your kindness makes You in pain for fear of a battaile. I hope this letter will make You easy, for I really think if thay do ventur a Battaille on the disadvantages thay must have, it is the will of God thay shou'd be beatten, for tho thay have more Redgments then wee, I think we have as many men. What ever happens, do me the justice to beleive, I am and ever will be tenderly . . . <sup>3</sup>

After protracted discussions and long letters to and from the King, Burgundy and Berwick marched towards each other at the utmost speed on August 27. They joined, as Marlborough had forecast, at Grammont on the 29th, and reached the Scheldt at Tournai together on September 1. Berwick, who refused to serve under Vendôme, resigned his command, and became Burgundy's rival adviser. It was learned that Marlborough had left Helchin on the

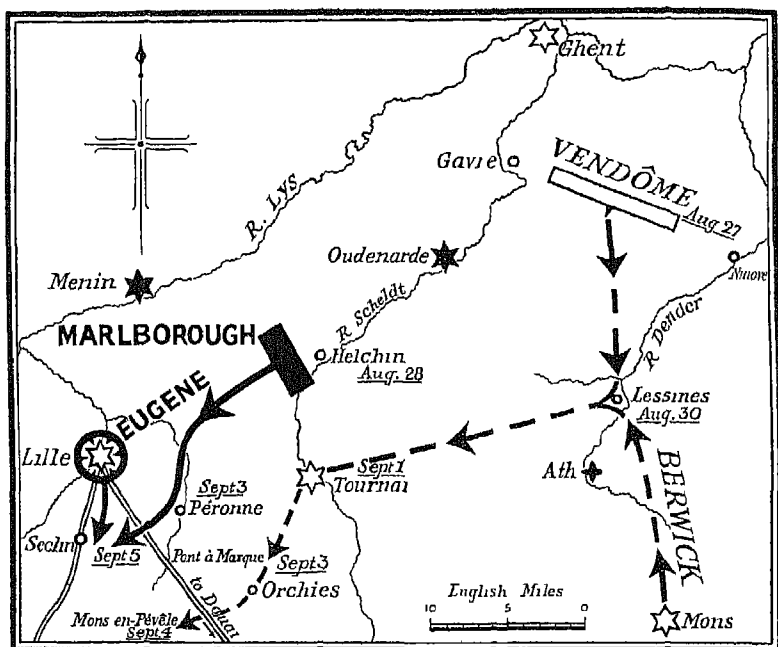
<sup>1</sup> A village near Lille.

<sup>2</sup> There were two Craggs, father and son. The former was secretary to the Ordnance Board at this time ; the latter was Stanhope's able secretary and the newly appointed English Resident at Barcelona. The son is probably the one mentioned here.

<sup>3</sup> Blenheim MSS.

## MARLBOROUGH

31st and that he was moving on an inner circle between them and Lille, which, they heard, had been since the 27th under the heaviest bombardment by Eugene. They spent September 2 in crossing the Scheldt, camped at Orchies on the 3rd, and reached Mons-en-Pévèle during the 4th. Here they were joined by their heavy cannon from Douai. Burgundy and Vendôme climbed the heights behind the



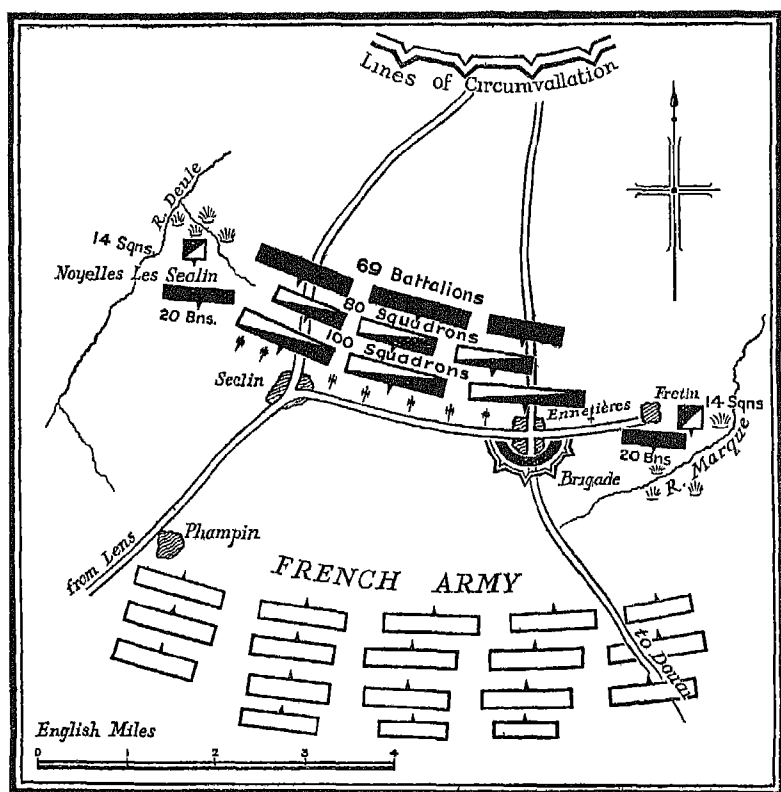
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camp, and thence saw the allied army spread in a wide arc before them. Their best chance was to draw out their line astride of the Lille-Douai road, and begin the battle that very evening. Although all their troops had not come up, they had on the spot or close at hand nearly double Marlborough's strength. Berwick's account agrees with Vendôme's view that the hour was too late. It was, however, earlier than that on which Marlborough had stormed the Schellenberg. Thus night fell in silence. But all seemed set for battle on

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

the 5th. The fate of Lille and of the campaign was at stake. The orders of the King to fight a decisive engagement were imperative and reiterated.

Marlborough's concentration was effected with precision. Before dawn on the 5th Eugene, with seventy-two squadrons



SEPTEMBER 5, 1708

and twenty-six battalions, arrived from the siege and took his station on Marlborough's right. General Fagel, with seven battalions, by "incredible" marches from Dutch Brabant reached the battle front as the sun rose. The Captain-General drew out 209 squadrons and 109 battalions, between seventy and eighty thousand men, to face the combined French army of a hundred and ten thousand.

## MARLBOROUGH

As this was the only occasion when Marlborough seemed prepared to fight a defensive battle on a large scale, his dispositions are of interest. The position he had selected permitted the French to attack only on a narrow front. He narrowed the gap further by strong infantry bodies on either flank supported by cavalry. In the gap he placed his cavalry in two lines, covered by guns and backed by infantry. To prevent the enemy capturing Ennetières village on his front and so breaking the cohesion of his cavalry attack, and also to disrupt the French cavalry attack, he occupied it with a brigade of infantry. He clearly intended to disorganize the more numerous French cavalry by artillery fire, and then to charge them down-hill with cavalry supported by infantry, trusting to the training and morale of his cavalry as proved at Blenheim, Elixem, and Ramillies. The position he had selected was four miles outside the lines of circumvallation. He made no attempt to impede the approach and deployment of the enemy. In order to leave himself full freedom to counter-attack early in the action, he did not at first entrench. When Eugene proposed this Marlborough answered that "since he had commanded he had never accustomed his army to entrench in the presence of the enemy." Eventually he allowed digging to begin at Ennetières; but he kept the whole of the rest of the field open to a gigantic manœuvre-battle once the enemy had committed themselves to the attack. Thus we may measure his confidence in his troops and in himself, and his readiness to risk all upon the stroke of the day.

A different mood held the French High Command. At daylight their chiefs began a prolonged reconnaissance. Vendôme wished to attack at once. Berwick pointed out the particular marshes and woods which would interfere with the advance. Burgundy decided that the approaches must be improved before the attack could be made. This work was accordingly begun, and it soon became apparent that there would be no general battle on the 5th. Boufflers, as prearranged, took advantage of Eugene's absence from the siege to make a vigorous sortie upon his denuded lines. We

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

are told by several authorities <sup>1</sup> that as early as ten A.M. orders were issued to Eugene's troops to return to the siege. But this is absurd. Even the infantry did not move off the field till darkness fell; and the cavalry not till the next day.<sup>2</sup> Marlborough, although now only half the strength of the enemy, but with confidence confirmed by their indecision, was still reluctant to entrench. Bidding high for battle, he was prepared to run what seemed desperate risks to tempt the enemy. But the opinion of Eugene, and, indeed, of all the allied generals, was so strong that during the evening of the 5th he began to break the ground, and by the 8th important works stretched from Noyelles to Fretin. As he was now confined to defensive action, he reorganized his array, the infantry being in two lines behind the trenches and the cavalry massed in rear of the wings. The difference between these dispositions and those of the 5th reveals very clearly the kind of battle he had hoped to fight.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

FRETIN  
September 7

Since my last, I have had yours of the 20th, and am very sorry to see, by the journal and letters from the fleet, that we are not to expect much from the expedition; for it is certain, if the sight of tents and militia can hinder them from landing, they will, in some degree, find them all along the coast.

M. de Vendôme having drawn all the troops possible from the garrisons, and having a great train of artillery joined him from Douay, made his own army and ours believe we should have had a battle on the 5th, which was the King of France's birthday, so that Prince Eugene joined me that morning with seventy-two squadrons and twenty-six battalions; but they not moving from their camp, which is in sight of ours, we sent back the foot the same night to the siege, resolving to entrench the front of our camp, which we began to do yesterday. The entrenchment is so far advanced that I have this morning sent him back all his horse, as also a detachment of 2000 foot, to assist him in the attacking of the counterscarp this night, and for the carrying on the siege with more vigour than hitherto; for it is certain our engineers find

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 318.

<sup>2</sup> Marlborough to Godolphin; Coxe, iv, 233.

## MARLBOROUGH

much more work than they expected. By the success of this night we shall be able to guess when we may have the town, for should we be obliged to fire much more powder and ball, we should be very much put to to find enough for the citadel, this being the twelfth day our batteries have fired. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The three French marshals spent the 5th and 6th in personal reconnaissance. All day they examined the hostile front with a curiosity which frequently drew the fire of its field batteries. All night they argued in Burgundy's tent. Vendôme still had no doubts; he urged an immediate onslaught, first upon the allied left and then extending to their centre, which lay across a wide plain. Berwick took the opposite view. The allied flanks were secure. It could only be a frontal attack in a country "where ten thousand could stop thirty thousand." Burgundy, torn between these conflicting views of eminent commanders, resorted to his customary habit of consulting his grandfather. So on the night of September 6 they all wrote letters to the King. Vendôme wrote :

I cannot resist saying that the most part of the general officers of this army care nothing about losing Lille, nor for the glory of the Duke of Burgundy and your Majesty's arms. What I see makes my heart bleed. However, these are the same men who are leading the mind of the Duke astray and in whom he has all confidence. From the brigadiers down to the soldiers the spirit is unsurpassable, but it is far otherwise among the generals.<sup>2</sup>

In a second letter, to Chamillart, he begged to be relieved at the earliest moment of all responsibility. Berwick wrote :

Even if our troops were as vigorous as I have seen them in the other war, it would not be possible to attack an enemy at least as strong as we, well-posted, entrenched, whose flanks are covered and who cannot be dislodged; but with an infantry *already rebuffed* and with battalions under strength we should risk not only a repulse, but even total overthrow thereafter. It is sad to see Lille taken, but it would be even more sad to lose the only army which now remains to us or which can stop the enemy after the fall of Lille.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 233-234.

<sup>2</sup> Pelet, viii, 89.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

Burgundy balanced between these opinions, but in the main agreed with Berwick.

Faced with this grim decision, Louis XIV showed no weakness ; he resolved to play the stake. He expressed his surprise that his positive orders had been questioned, and renewed his commands to Burgundy to attack even at the risk of " suffering the misfortunes inseparable from failure, less dishonouring however, both for his person and for the army than to become spectators of the capture of Lille." He sent Chamillart to the camp to enforce his will.

In the midst of this tension the Allies found themselves strong enough to prosecute the siege. The assaults upon the counterscarp were delivered on the prescribed day, although upon the opposite side of the city at this very moment the largest battle of the war seemed imminent. On the south of Lille Marlborough faced Vendôme at heavy odds. On the north side the great assault was launched. Fourteen thousand men reinforced the troops in the trenches, and at half-past seven in the evening attacked the whole front from one hornwork to the other. Four great mines exploded under the feet of the assailants, " which destroyed abundance of men." <sup>1</sup> All through the night the struggle raged with varying fortune in the intricacies of the fortress system. The counterscarp was stormed ; but, owing to the engineers who were to direct the second phase being all killed, and the workmen in their charge " departing under the Favour of the Night," <sup>1</sup> the enemy were able to retire to their capital works, from whence they maintained a terrible fire for some hours. It was impossible to advance beyond " the Angles of the Glacis of the two Hornworks and of the Tenaille." <sup>1</sup> Des Roques, the chief engineer upon this sector, recorded, " This unhappy Accident retards the Taking of the Town, which may yet hold out eight or ten Days." <sup>1</sup> The slaughter among the allied troops in this assault by all accounts was nearly equal to their loss in the battle of Oudenarde. The French claimed that five thousand men had fallen. Certainly between two and three thousand, of whom the most part

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 323.



## MARLBOROUGH

perished, covered the few acres of the saps and breaches with their gay uniforms and mangled bodies.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

September 13

Since my last, M. de Vendôme is come so near to us that we did begin to believe that his intention was to attack us, but yesterday and the day before he did nothing but fire a great quantity of cannon, and this day we have been very quiet, he having drawn his cannon from the batteries on our left, as we think, with a design to see what he can do on our right. We are encamped so near that there is no possibility of being at ease till Lille is taken. I have been so disturbed these two last nights and days that I am as hot as if I were in a fever, so that you will excuse my saying no more by this post.<sup>1</sup>

Had the French grand army forced a general battle on the morning of the 5th, as Marlborough hoped, every scrap of force at the disposal of the Allies would have been cast simultaneously into the fateful scales. The interest of these operations to posterity, and to military annals, consists in the odds against which Marlborough and Eugene preserved their ascendancy, and the absolute conviction with which they acted upon narrow and impalpable margins. Marlborough courted the decisive battle. He was ready to face with less than sixty thousand men the possible onslaught of a hundred and ten thousand. Yet at the same time five miles away Eugene involved himself in the tremendous and necessarily bloody assault of the breaches. The two captains were disappointed in both respects; the assault did not capture the capital works, and the French army did not face a battle. Even more difficult trials lay ahead.

As long as Burgundy and Vendôme were threatening a general battle to the south of Lille, the road from Brussels was fairly free from molestation. Although Marlborough had had to recall General Fagel from the duty of protecting the communications in order to strengthen the line of battle, several important replenishments of ammunition came safely

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 235.

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

through just in time to enable the bombardments to be continuously maintained. "Last night," writes the Chief Engineer, Des Roques, on September 10,

we lodged ourselves in the covered way ; and this night we shall work on a battery of thirty pieces of cannon, in order to widen the breach. The battery of eighteen guns having fired this day, with success, we may this evening make an attack upon one of the hornworks.<sup>1</sup>

While the siege was thus at its crisis and great numbers of troops involved in deadly grapple in the *débris* of the ramparts, the quagmire of the ditch, and the labyrinth of the counter-scarp galleries, Vendôme threatened again to force a battle. Very heavy cannonades and the deployment of the whole French army once more aroused the Allies' hopes. Eugene rejoined Marlborough on the south front with his cavalry and spare troops. But this time battle was no longer offered in the open field, and it was hardly to be conceived that the enemy would pay the price of demanding it against entrenchments. The only effect of the French demonstrations and bombardments of the 11th was to divert Eugene from the siege for a few hours, and to supply the Allies with a large quantity of cannon-balls, which were diligently collected and fired into Lille. On this day also an important munitions convoy which had left Brussels on the 8th was escorted into camp by Albemarle.

At a council of war on the 14th the proposal was made to open passages through the newly constructed works, march out, and actually attack the French army. Berwick in his memoirs says that Vendôme would in this case have suffered a total defeat. He states that Marlborough and Eugene favoured an offensive, but that the Dutch Deputies forbade them. Goslinga, who in later years discussed the war with Berwick, declares on the other hand that he and his colleagues urged the daring course, and that it was "the Princes" who were adverse. War in retrospect, like life, seems rich in opportunities ; but at the time one opportunity shuts out

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 323.

## MARLBOROUGH

another, and the choices are neither so numerous nor so obvious as appears.

All French Society—indeed, France itself—waited in protracted suspense. A freezing hush fell upon the Court. The card-tables, the supper parties, were deserted. The churches were thronged with rank and fashion praying for the life of husband, lover, son. It was known that Chamillart had been sent to the army for the express purpose of compelling its leaders to fight. This had seemed a very plain and obligatory course amid the galleries of Versailles and in the presence of Louis XIV. He arrived clear and decided. On the spot, in contact with the realities and the atmosphere of doubt which infected the French command, the War Minister soon lost heart. He watched the desultory cannonades. He heard the talk. He saw the ground and the defences along which flaunted the standards of the Allies, and behind which the shapes of Marlborough and Eugene seemed crouched to spring. On the night of the 14th Vendôme was left alone in his opinion; Burgundy, Berwick, Chamillart, and almost all the generals were for retreat. At this point it cost Vendôme little to persist in valorous opinions. No one would take him at his word. Were there not other methods of succouring Lille? They knew the besiegers were short of powder. Although two convoys had lately arrived, a third was urgently expected. Any prolonged interruption of the supplies must be fatal. All the communications were exposed. If the main French army were used, it should be possible to cut Marlborough and Eugene both from Brussels and the sea. There is little doubt that the painful and humiliating decision was right. Comforting themselves with these hopes, the French army fell back by Orchies to Tournai. Burgundy's headquarters were at Saulchoi on September 17, and Marlborough observed him from behind the Marque.

*John to Sarah*

*September 17*

Whenever I have a minute to myself, I make use of it to write to my dear soul; for M. de Vendôme, having gathered

## THE SIEGE OF LILLE

much more strength together than we could imagine, and being camped *so near that in one hour's time we might be engaged*, obliges us to be so very diligent that we have very little rest, by reason of the troops we are obliged to have at the siege, which makes him have near twice as much foot as I have in this army ; but I am so well entrenched that I no ways fear their forcing us. But the siege goes on so very slowly that I am in perpetual fears that it may continue so long, and consequently consume so much stores, that we may at last not have wherewithal to finish, which would be very cruel. These are my fears, but I desire you will let nobody know them. I long extremely to have this campaign well ended ; for of all the campaigns I have made this has been the most painful ; but I am in the galley, and must row on as long as this war lasts. . . .<sup>1</sup>

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

*September 20*

. . . It is impossible for me to express the uneasiness I suffer for the ill conduct of our engineers at the siege, where I think everything goes very wrong. It would be a cruel thing, if after we have obliged the enemy to quit all thoughts of relieving the place by force, which they have done, by repassing the Scheldt, we should fail of taking it by the ignorance of our engineers and the want of stores ; for we have already fired very near as much as was demanded for the taking of the town and citadel ; and as yet we are not entire masters of the counterscarp ; so that to you I may own my despair of ending this campaign, so as in reason we might have expected. I beg you to assure the Queen that my greatest concern is on her account ; for as to myself, I am so tired of the world that were she not concerned my affliction would not be great.

When the fate of Lille is once known, we shall endeavour all we can to bring the French to a general engagement ; *but as that is what we shall desire, I take it for granted it is what they will avoid.* . . .<sup>2</sup>

This just reflection was fully confirmed by events.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 235-236.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 238-239.

## CHAPTER XXVI

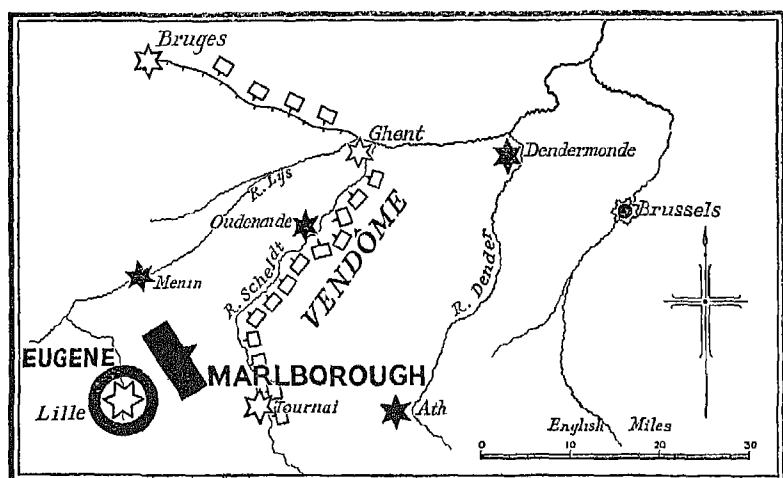
### WYNENDAEL

1708,  
September-  
October

A GREAT battle being denied him, Marlborough, as he had foreseen, must face a far more harassing attack. The siege batteries were firing at full blast. The defence of Lille had been already maintained for nearly three weeks beyond the scheduled time. The bombardment was living from hand to mouth. To suspend it even for a few days was to take the pressure off Marshal Boufflers, who, for his part, watched with anxiety the daily diminution of his own limited magazines. Unless he could continue his counter-battery, the front would clearly break. The King had prescribed a proportion of powder to be reserved for the defence of the citadel. The losses of the garrison had been severe. If Eugene's bombardment and the progress of his saps continued, Boufflers must within a definite time retire to the citadel. But if the cannonade ceased he could stand where he was indefinitely. All therefore turned upon the convoys. Now upon the communications with Brussels came the main French army. In the last fortnight of September Vendôme and Burgundy occupied the whole line of the Scheldt from the Lille approaches to Ghent. They held and fortified every crossing. They made a curve around Oudenarde, at which point their defences became more like a fortress than field entrenchments. By this means they cut absolutely all communication between the Allies and Brussels, and beyond Brussels with Holland. Marlborough and Eugene were thus isolated. They were separated both by road and river from their base, from the homeland, and from all supplies, while they had the greatest siege of modern history on their hands, and when any slackening in their attack meant almost certain failure. From this time forward the siege of Lille became a desperate operation.

## WYNENDAEL

Only one resource lay open. Marlborough's eyes turned to the sea-coast. The fortress and harbour of Ostend were in his hands. The road, often a causeway amid the canals, streams, and inundations of the coastal region, ran through Thourout, Roulers, and Menin to the siege, a distance of less than fifty miles. But on either side of this life-line lay the hostile fortresses of Ypres, Nieuport, and Bruges.<sup>1</sup> From



VENDÔME CUTS THE ALLIED COMMUNICATIONS

Nieuport the French controlled the sluices of the Yser, and could flood a large and indefinite area. The road from the coast was now alone left to the besiegers of Lille, and the French gathered heavy forces on both sides of Ostend, but especially from the north, to attack the convoys. Possessing the command of the sea, Marlborough had directed large supplies of munitions upon Ostend. On September 21 General Erle with his six thousand British infantry was brought under a strong escort of the fleet from the Channel into Ostend. Marlborough sent a trusted officer to him with full instructions,<sup>2</sup> and set him to work to prepare a heavy convoy.

Meanwhile the siege and bombardments proceeded with

<sup>1</sup> See general map of the Western Netherlands, facing p. 556.

<sup>2</sup> *Dispatches*, IV, 231.

## MARLBOROUGH

all possible vigour in the teeth of an obstinate defence. Eugene prepared for another major assault on the St Andrew and St Magdalen sectors. This was delivered on the evening of the 21st by about fifteen thousand men. At first good progress was made, and it seemed that the grand breach would be carried. But a violent sortie from the city robbed the assailants of most of their gains. In this savage night they lost at least a thousand men. Among the wounded was Eugene. With Hesse-Cassel at his side, he conducted the attack at close quarters. Seeing the grenadiers repulsed, he advanced into the deadly fire to rally and animate his troops. He was soon struck by a musket-ball which grazed his forehead above his left eye. The force of the blow was broken by his cocked hat, which was "beat off" his head.<sup>1</sup> Hesse-Cassel gave him his own hat, already pierced by a bullet. Eugene, according to his usual habit when receiving a wound, made light of his injury and insisted upon remaining in action. But as it was apparent that he was half stunned and dazed his officers prevailed upon him to withdraw. He was led or carried to his headquarters while the struggle at the breaches was at its height. Although his injury was bloodless, he was suffering from severe concussion of the brain. It was clear to all about him that he would be incapacitated for some time. This serious news was carried to Marlborough during the night. Early the next morning the Duke arrived at Eugene's headquarters. He found his comrade, among an expostulating staff, preparing to go up to the trenches. He was only prevailed upon to return to his couch by Marlborough's undertaking to conduct the siege himself, as well as to cover it, till he was restored.

From September 21 till the end of the month the double burden was borne by Marlborough. This was a period of incredible strain. The besiegers were in extremities. The batteries were approaching the end of their ammunition. The engineers were scandalously at fault in their estimates. Around Lille all was in arrears and in confusion. A critical and hazardous operation was required to bring the convoy

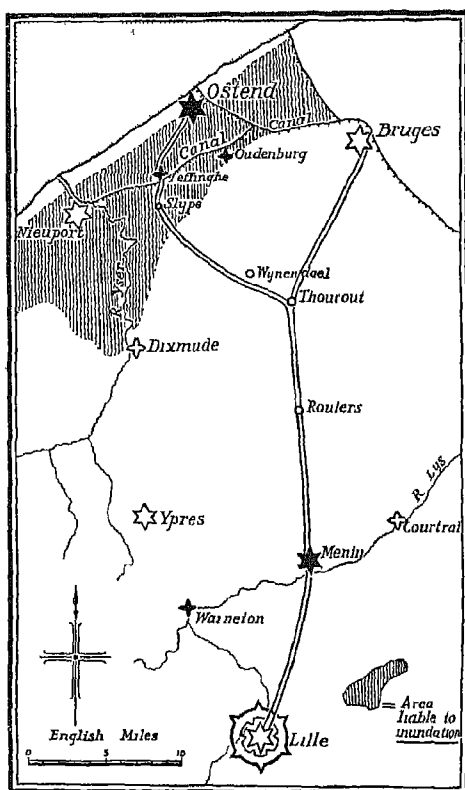
<sup>1</sup> Ledlard, ii, 331.

## WYNENDAEL

through from Ostend in the face of superior forces and ever-spreading inundations. Riding to and fro between the covering army and the siege, Marlborough effectively "sustained the weight of the command."<sup>1</sup> He looked narrowly into the siege-stores and munitions, and was shocked at his discoveries. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> he renewed the assault on the fortifications. He directed it himself from the trenches, and after hard fighting a substantial improvement was achieved. In these days he reorganized the siege operations like a careful housekeeper. The bombardment and trench-grapple were ceaselessly maintained. Meanwhile Eugene began to throw off his concussion.

The remorseless attack and heavy firing reduced Marshal Boufflers's magazines to very near the last reserve for the defence of the citadel. A French captain from Burgundy's army, creeping through the lines,

stripped himself stark naked, and, having hidden his clothes, swam over seven canals and ditches and got in that manner into the town. He returned the same way, and, finding his clothes again, brought the Duke of Burgundy a letter from the Marshal,



COMMUNICATIONS, OSTEND-LILLE

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 332.



## MARLBOROUGH

which was so contrived that he carried it in his mouth secure from being damped by moisture.<sup>1</sup>

The letter showed that without more powder the defence of the city must be abandoned. This emergency provoked a dramatic enterprise. The Chevalier de Luxembourg, a Major-General, with about two thousand dragoons, who "besides their arms carried each a fusee and a bag of sixty pounds weight of powder," set out during the night of the 28th along the Douai road. In order the better to conceal their identity in the darkness they wore green boughs in their helmets, as was often done by the Allies on battle occasions. They arrived at the lines of circumvallation at a point near Pont-à-Tressin held by the Palatine troops. Their officers pretended to be Germans carrying prisoners to the camp. In this war of many nations and all languages spoken indifferently on either side they were suffered by carelessness—other accounts say by corruption—to pass the barrier. Several hundred were already safely over when a subaltern officer, "having some distrust, advanced to examine them." There was a challenge, an altercation, shouts, shots, and pandemonium. The whole two thousand galloped along the road towards the city. About half got through, the rest turned back in disorder. The road from Douai to Lille was paved with cobbles. Horses slipped: sparks struck out from their hoofs, or fire from the muskets, ignited powder-bags. A succession of loud explosions alarmed the camps and covered the road with scorched fragments of men and horses. About thirty prisoners were taken, but Luxembourg brought into Lille nearly sixty thousand pounds of powder for the fortress batteries. Marlborough's and other allied accounts minimized this grave annoyance, but it was regarded throughout Europe as a brilliant feat of arms.

During this last week of September the fate of Lille hung in the balance. At several agonized councils the raising of the siege was debated by the allied commanders. Goslinga, as usual, declares that he and his colleagues were for fighting

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 329.

## WYNENDAEL

it out, and that Marlborough was in despair. All accounts agree that Eugene, rising from his sickbed, declared "that he would be responsible for the success *provided he was supported with ammunition.*" But this begged the question. It is certain that Marlborough, who was engaged in the important operation of bringing in the convoy, allowed it to be known that, unless the convoy came through, the siege must be abandoned. Here we must let him speak for himself.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

CAMP AT LANNOY

September 24, 1708

Since my last Prince Eugene has received a wound in his head, which I thank God is no ways dangerous; and I hope to-morrow or next day he may be abroad. Ever since Friday, that he was wounded, I have been obliged to be every day at the siege, which, with the vexation of its going so ill, I am almost dead. We made a third attack last night, and are not yet masters of the whole counterscarp; but that which is yet worse, those who have the charge of the stores have declared to the Deputies that the opiniatrey of the siege is such that they have not stores sufficient for the taking of the town. Upon which the Prince has desired to speak with me to-morrow morning. My next will acquaint you of what is resolved, but I fear you must expect nothing good.

I have this afternoon a letter from Lieutenant-General Erle from Ostend. He is ill of the gout. The enemy has cut in three several places the canal of Nieuport, by which they have put that country under water, to hinder our communication with Ostend. However, I shall find ways of letting him know what I desire. I am so vexed at the misbehaviour of our engineers that I have no patience, and beg your excuse that I say no more till the next post.<sup>1</sup>

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

September 27

You will have seen by my last letter the unhappy circumstances we are in, by the very ill conduct of our engineers and others. Upon the wounding of Prince Eugene I thought it

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 243.

## MARLBOROUGH

absolutely necessary to inform myself of everything of the siege ; for before I did not meddle in anything but the covering of it. Upon examination I find they did not deal well with the Prince, for when I told him that there did not remain powder and ball for above four days, he was very much surprised. I own to you that I fear we have something more in our misfortunes than ignorance. Our circumstances being thus, and the impossibility of getting a convoy from Brussels, obliged me to take measures for getting some ammunition from Ostend, which we could never have attempted *but for the good luck of the English battalions being there.*

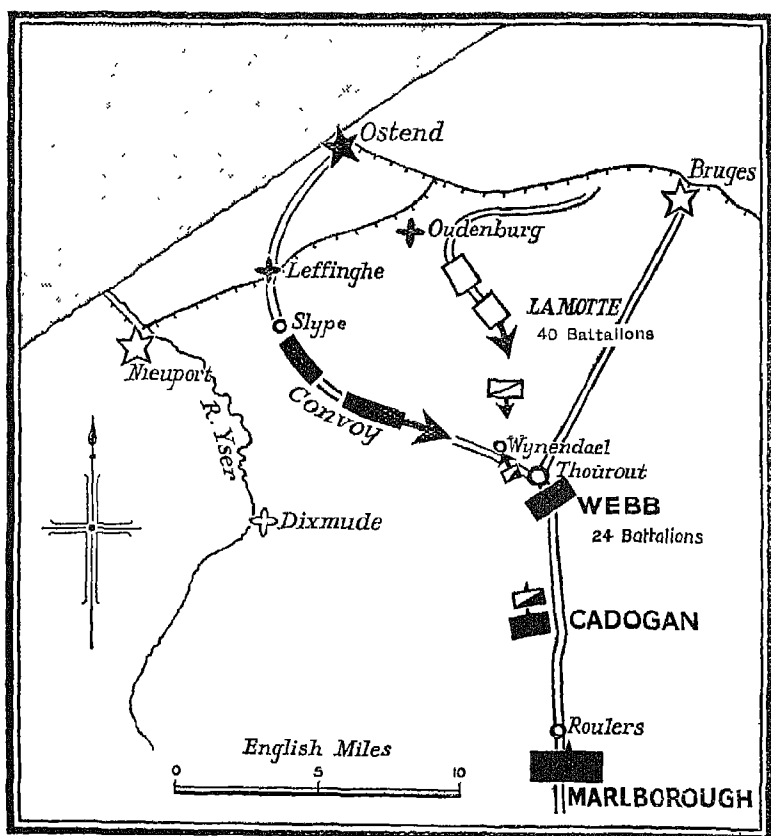
Having time, I begin to write in the morning, but as the letters are not to go till the evening, I hope to send you some certainty of the convoy ; I having sent yesterday Major-General Cadogan with twenty-six squadrons and twelve battalions to meet them, so that they might come with the greater safety, with which we must do our best ; for should this not come safe, I am afraid we must not flatter ourselves of hoping to get any other, though you may be sure we shall leave nothing unattempted. It is impossible to express the trouble this matter has given me ; for I am sensible that not only her Majesty but all the common cause must suffer if we miscarry in this undertaking, which we have but too much reason to apprehend. . . .<sup>1</sup>

General Erle, whom Marlborough had reinforced at Ostend till he had perhaps seven thousand British infantry and a large number of vehicles and horses, in spite of his gout behaved with zeal and skill. He succeeded in draining a large part of the inundation between Nieuport and Ostend. He occupied Leffinghe, and there built a bridge over the canal. Communication was thus for the moment restored with the main army. Marlborough had sent twelve battalions and as many squadrons towards Leffinghe to receive the convoy. But now Vendôme ordered La Motte to advance southward from Bruges with no fewer than twenty-two thousand men, a small army, and seize the prize. Marlborough had early information of this movement, though he underrated its strength. On the 25th he sent twelve more battalions and some horse to reinforce the convoy guard. The command

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 253-254.

## WYNENDAELE

of these troops was confided to General Webb. We are familiar with this picturesque personage through Thackeray's malicious pages. Webb was a high Tory, at heart a Jacobite, a man as vain as he was brave, but also a competent and



SITUATION, MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28

experienced veteran of the long wars. He was now to fight a most brilliant and glorious action, no small part of whose lustre falls upon the British infantry.

Early on the morning of the 28th the precious convoy was trailing along the road from Leffinghe to Thourout when the news came that La Motte, rebuffed by the allied

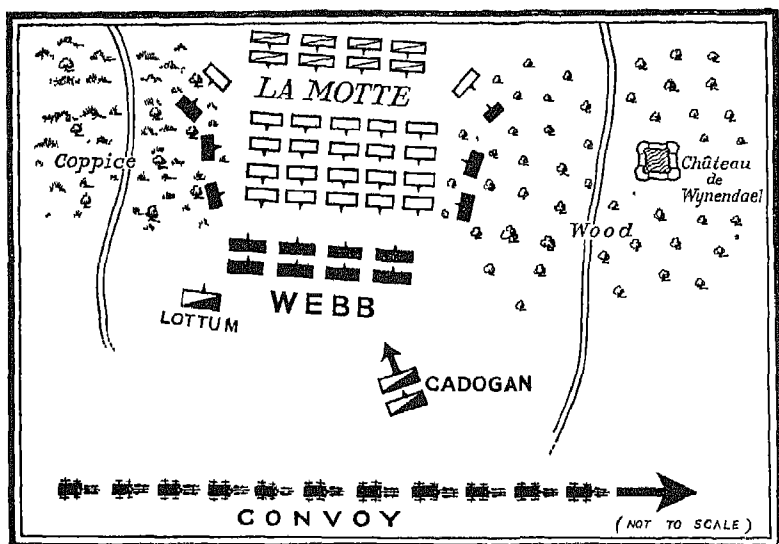
## MARLBOROUGH

defences at Oudenburg, was advancing at right angles upon it. All French historians have condemned his dispositions. His pathway to strike the convoy led him between two thick woods a thousand yards apart. It is contended that his great numerical superiority—far beyond what Marlborough had expected—should have been used to outflank one or the other of these woods. But La Motte felt that the thickets on the one hand and the Château de Wynendael on the other debarred him from this. Accordingly he advanced between the woods, and about two p.m. found himself confronted by General Webb with twenty-four battalions drawn up in the gap, and, as he was soon to learn, in the woods on either side. He deployed his whole force, line behind line, and after three hours' cannonade advanced to the assault, being in superior strength of at least two to one. His troops found themselves fired upon not only by the British infantry on their front, but by strong forces hidden on both their flanks. The slaughter was heavy, and for those days unusually swift. His leading lines, largely composed of so-called Spanish infantry—that is to say, Belgian battalions adhering to the French—melted under the fusillade, and the rest refused to renew the battle. Here was a striking instance of the superior fire-discipline which was so marked a feature of Marlborough's infantry training. Three or four thousand men lay killed or wounded in the narrow space, and none would face the allied line, which stood unbroken and invincible. In the intense fire which preceded this decision Webb himself lost nearly a thousand men. But the repulse of the French was utter. Marlborough, who had come with strong forces of the main army to Roulers, had the day before sent Cadogan with twenty-six squadrons and infantry support to strengthen Webb. Cadogan arrived with a handful of squadrons as the victory declared itself. He offered Webb to charge the defeated French corps. Webb thought the odds were too great, and did not ask this effort of his comrade. Meanwhile the convoy had slipped safely past the point of intersection and was coming within the ambit of Marlborough's main army. The victory of Wynendael had sealed the fate of Lille.

## WYNENDAEL

It had another sequel. The Prince of Hesse-Cassel on the 29th sent the States-General a report explaining the unpleasant incident of Luxembourg's dragoons carrying the powder into Lille. In a paragraph at the end he added :

Your High Mightinesses will, no doubt, have had direct advice of the advantage which the troops, lately arrived from England, sustained by those Mons. Cadogan carried with him from the



THE ACTION OF WYNENDAEL

army, have obtained near the canal that goes from Ostend to Newport over the Duke of Berwick's troops which attacked them. The great convoy is arrived at Menin. I congratulate your High Mightinesses on both these accounts. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Hesse-Cassel lay, of course, on the far side of Lille, and had no personal knowledge of what had happened nearly forty miles away at Wynendael. But, as it chanced, his was the first report that arrived. It was instantly published in Holland and, as soon as it reached England, in the *Gazette*. Thus the whole credit of the action was officially ascribed to Cadogan, and the name of Webb, the Tory General, was

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, II, 336.

## MARLBOROUGH

not even mentioned. When the truth was known later on the Tory Party raised a furious outcry. Here was a proven case of Marlborough stealing away the credit from an heroic Tory commander and bestowing it upon his own personal favourite and follower Cadogan. From this in the winter arose a bitter debate in the House of Commons, when all the spite of the Tory Opposition was discharged upon Marlborough's head. In fact no one can be more easily proved guiltless. His official dispatch to the Secretary of State, written as early as Hesse-Cassel's casual paragraph, made no reference to Cadogan and did full justice to Webb. Cadogan himself evidently told the tale in a fair and soldierly manner. Marlborough on his report wrote immediately to Webb as follows :

CAMP AT RONCQ  
*September 29, 1708*

Mr Cadogan is just now arrived, and has acquainted me with the success of the action you had yesterday in the afternoon against the body of troops commanded by M. de la Motte at Wynendael, which must be attributed chiefly to your good conduct and resolution. You may assure yourself I shall do you justice at home, and be glad on all occasions to own the service you have done in securing this convoy, upon which the success of our siege so much depends.<sup>1</sup>

His private letters to Godolphin, as we shall see, were earnestly concerned about Webb's immediate promotion. Webb himself was eventually satisfied that the Duke had done him no injustice. But the malice of the Tory Party spread the impression of an act of personal meanness jealously perpetrated against a subordinate who was also a political opponent. The Duke, struggling with the siege, only gradually became aware of what had occurred. Meanwhile his own letters clear him from this as from so many other reproaches.

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

CAMP AT RONCQ  
*October 1, 1708*

In my last I had not time to give you any account of our last action, but that of referring you to what was writ to the Secretary's

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, 242.



# TAPESTRY OF THE BATTLE OF WYNENDAEL

*By permission of the Duke of Marlborough Photograph by permission of the  
Victoria and Albert Museum*





## WYNENDAEL

office ; I have since had a particular account. Our loss in killed and wounded is very near 1000 ; by what the enemy left dead on the place they must have lost at least three times as many as we. They had above double our number, all our horse, except 300, and 2000 foot, being sent on before, for the security of the convoy, so that there were not above 8000 men ; and it is said by the officers who were left wounded on the field of battle that they had forty battalions and forty-six squadrons, as also cannon.

Webb and Cadogan have on this occasion, as they always will do, behaved themselves extremely well. The success of this vigorous action is, in a great measure, owing to them. If they had not succeeded, and our convoy had been lost, the consequence must have been the raising of the siege the next day. All her Majesty's subjects have had the good fortune this campaign in all actions to distinguish themselves ; so that I should not do them justice if I did not beg the Queen that when this campaign shall be ended, she will be pleased to make a promotion among the generals of this army only, which will be a mark of her favour and their merit ; for hitherto, though almost all the action has been in this army, yet every general has advanced equally with them, though two parts of three of them have not so much as served this war. If the Queen and Prince approve of what I desire, in favour of this army, I should be glad it might not be known to anybody, till I have an opportunity of giving the names for their approbation. Count Corneille, M. Overkirk's son, has on this occasion behaved himself extremely well.<sup>1</sup>

Great if haggard rejoicings saluted the arrival of the new convoy in the camps before Lille. Above two hundred and fifty thousand pounds of powder, with cannon-balls and shells sufficient in those days for a fortnight's bombardment, had reached the besiegers. Besides this Eugene, now fully recovered, began to appear among the troops, and in the early days of October resumed the conduct of the siege, which was prosecuted night and day. However, a new and even more dangerous attack impended upon the communications. Vendôme, stung by the disgrace of Wynendael, came down on October 3 through Bruges to Oudenburg with thirty thousand men. He reinforced Nieuport and threatened Ostend and

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 255.

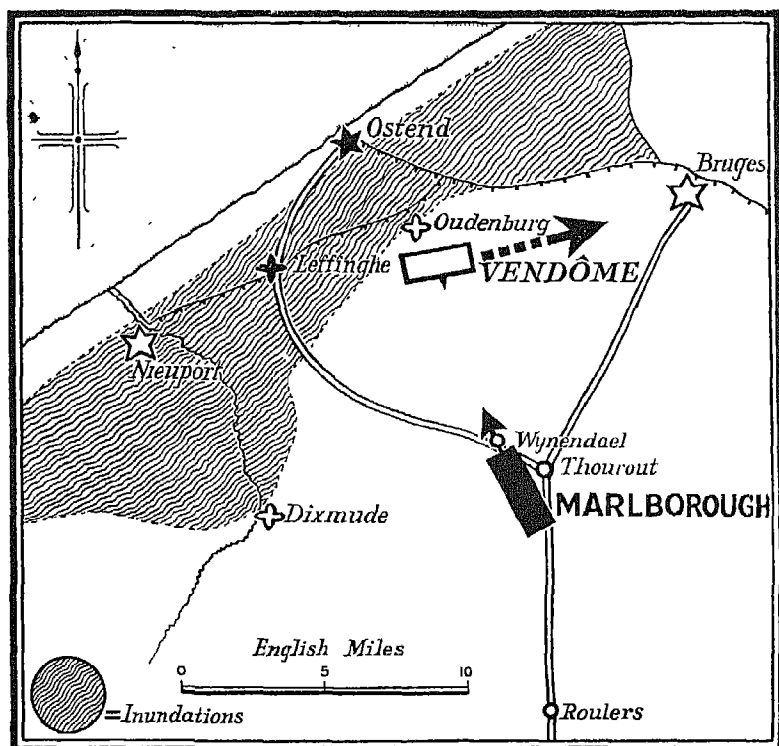
## MARLBOROUGH

Leffinghe. He broke the dykes, opened the sluices in all directions, and "drowned the country." The French were still capable of moving freely all along the coast across the allied communications, which now seemed finally cut. This mortal challenge was instantly accepted. On the morning of the 7th Marlborough divided his army. He left twenty battalions and as many squadrons to aid Eugene in case of need, and with sixty battalions and 130 squadrons, or about forty-five thousand men, marched at daybreak directly upon Vendôme. At Roulers he learned that Vendôme was still at Oudenburg, and there seemed to be good prospects of pinning him against his own inundations. The expectation of battle ran high. King Augustus hastened from the siege to see the day. In an intercepted letter Vendôme had assured Louis XIV that "he engaged his honour the Allies should have no further communication with Ostend." Indeed, the Marshal was disposed to stay and fight. This hardihood was not shared by his generals. Finding remonstrance useless, they adopted, according to Berwick, a more compulsive argument. They opened the sluices higher up the coast, and before it was too late flooded him out of his camp. Marlborough, arriving on the field of Wynecdael with his vanguard, heard that the French had retreated to Bruges, laying the countryside under water to the utmost extent. He accordingly halted his army at Roulers.

Ostend was now completely isolated by the floods. Another heavy convoy of munitions, brandy, salt, and other necessities had been transported thither by sea from Holland and England. Eight or ten miles of flood-water, rising with the full-moon tides, stretched between these supplies and the ravening batteries and straitened army before Lille. Hitherto the want of food had not been felt. The forays into France had provided for men and horses. The convoys had been reserved almost entirely for powder and ball. In the third week of October, however, Marlborough was forced to reduce the bread ration by one-third, four days serving for six. He ordered the other two days to be paid in money. "Particular care," he wrote to Cadogan, "must be taken

## WYNENDAEL

that the officers pay the two days in money, that the soldiers have less reason to complain.”<sup>1</sup> He had in the middle of October to push his foraging parties ever more deeply into France around Armentières and La Bassée. Both besiegers and besieged were in dire straits. All hung on the passage of



OCTOBER 7, 1708

supplies. Marlborough now took possession of the region round Dixmude with strong forces. Erle on one side of the floods collected a flotilla; Cadogan on the other procured high-wheeled vehicles. By these means the powder and shot was ferried across the inundations, drawn through the shallow waters by Cadogan's high wheels, and finally transferred to Marlborough's supply wagons. Every day and

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, 268.

## MARLBOROUGH

night small quantities came through. The Duke's letters record each arrival, and give instructions for drying any bags of powder which were wetted. Thus the cannon and the siege were fed literally by handfuls.

Forthwith there developed an aquatic warfare. The French sent light-draught galleys from Dunkirk to attack the munition boats on their daily journeys. The English brought a number of armed small craft to combat these by day and night. The struggle continued in an archipelago of villages and unsubmerged hillocks. The key to all was Leffinghe, now a strong place, but almost flooded at high tide. The French had begun to attack this post on the 13th. With their galleys they mounted a battery on an island knoll, and maintained a severe bombardment to which there could be no reply. By night they attacked in galleys and flat-bottomed boats. The garrison, twelve hundred strong, defended themselves vigorously for eight days, and on the 24th they were relieved by fresh troops. The French pressure increased continually, and the waters spread. ". . . The enemy," wrote Marlborough to Sunderland on October 13, "having cut the dykes in other places, the spring-tides threw in so much water, that their galleys and armed boats rowed over the very places where we had posted our men, whereby they have destroyed a great tract of land for many years and prevented our drawing anything more from thence; however we have got over nearly seventeen hundred barrels of powder. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Thus by many desperate shifts and contrivances the bombardment of Lille was maintained. The siege batteries were now entrenched amid the ruins of the fortifications. "They have mounted nearly fifty pieces of cannon, besides a battery of mortars," wrote Marlborough, "upon the counterscarp, and hope to begin to fire from them to-morrow." <sup>2</sup> This intense fire at close quarters marked a well-known phase. The breaches gaped. Boufflers had already withdrawn most of his cannon into the citadel. The hour of summons and of general storm drew near.

Marshal Overkirk did not live to see success. He died in

<sup>1</sup> *Despatches*, iv, 269.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## WYNENDAEL

his headquarters at the siege on the night of October 18. Marlborough's faithful comrade, the indomitable Dutch veteran, had known since Oudenarde that his end was approaching. He sunned himself in the glory of that victory, to which he had himself given the crowning stroke. We are indebted to Goslinga for a striking picture of the old marshal during his last few weeks.

I saw on one of those days a magnificent spectacle, which struck me by its singularity. The generals and colonels had been ordered to have all the flags, standards, and kettle-drums brought to the heads of the army, the Duke, the Prince, and the Field-Marshal. . . . Ours were the greatest in number. They were arranged as trophies around the walls of a long, spacious hall. The worthy M. Overkirk, virtually moribund, was seated in his best clothes in a great armchair at the end of the hall, surrounded by all these glorious trophies. I found him in this state one morning when I went there with Prince Eugene. The Prince was as much impressed as I was, and said to me that he was reminded of one of the old Roman generals displaying the spoils of a victory. In fact, nothing could be finer nor more striking.<sup>1</sup>

Marlborough's letters carry on the story of the campaign.

### *Marlborough to Godolphin*

THOUROUT  
October 8

The uneasy march of this day cannot hinder me from repeating again the obligation the Queen and all the Allies have to Major-General Webb, who will give you this letter; and I beg you will present him to the Queen; and were it not for measures I am obliged, for the Queen's service, to keep with the States-General [about the relative promotion of British and Dutch officers], I should desire her Majesty would declare him a Lieutenant-General, which he does extremely deserve. But as it must be done with management with them, I humbly desire the Queen will assure him that when she makes a promotion this winter, he shall be one; and I will be answerable that not only now, but at all times, he shall deserve it from her.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Cox, iv, 260.

## MARLBOROUGH

### *Marlbrough to Godolphin*

ROUSSELAER [ROULERS]  
October 9

You will know by this post that we are in great want of another convoy, so that I marched on Sunday morning, with 110 squadrons and sixty battalions, and camped that night at Rousselaer; and yesterday I was in hopes to have been in sight of the Duke of Vendôme, who was encamped at Oudenburg, to hinder our having anything from Ostend. But as soon as he was informed of my being at Rousselaer, he decamped, and marched to Bruges. During the time he has been at Oudenburg, he has cut all the dikes; so that the whole country is under water, which makes it impracticable for our carts to pass; but I have sent to Ostend, to see if they can put the powder into bags, which may be brought by horses; for we hope to find a passage by which they may come. God knows how this siege may end; I have but little faith, and am quite uneasy, but resolved to persist, as long as there is the least hope.

Major-General Webb goes for England; I write to her Majesty by him. I hope she will be pleased to tell him that she is very well satisfied with his services, and that when she makes a promotion this winter, he may be sure of being a Lieutenant-General, which really this last action makes his due. . . .<sup>1</sup>

### *Marlbrough to Godolphin*

October 19

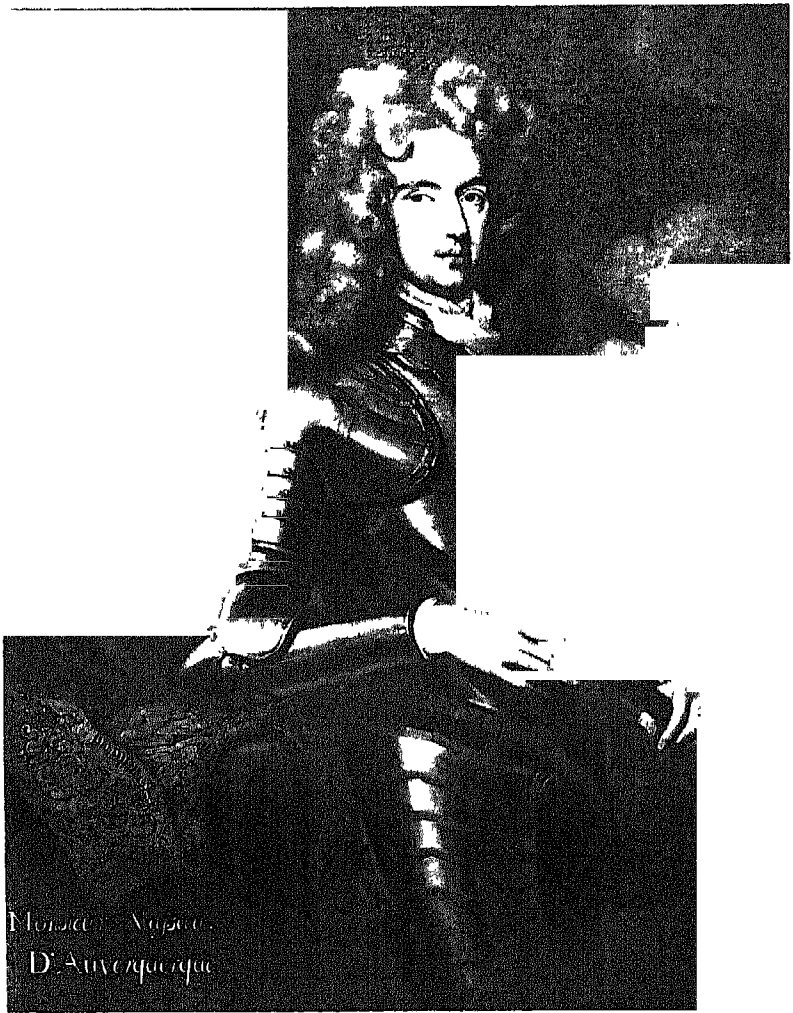
Poor M. Overkirk died yesterday, by which her Majesty will save the pension. . . . It would be an act of goodness and generosity if the Queen would be pleased to give some part of it to Count Corneille [Overkirk's son], who is as virtuous and as brave a man as lives. His father has been able, I fear, to leave him nothing. . . .

We hope in four or five days to give a general storm, if they will venture [to stand] it, which I fear they will [*i.e.*, instead of surrendering the town]. I wish I may be mistaken, since it will cost a great many lives. God continues to bless us with good weather.<sup>2</sup>

On the 22nd, all the troops being at their stations for the final assault, which if successful would deprive the garrison

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 258-259.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.



GENERAL OVERKIRK  
Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*By permission of David Milner, Esq.*





## WYNENDAEL

of quarter and expose the city to sack, Marshal Boufflers beat a parley and offered to surrender the town. The hostages and courtesies were immediately exchanged. Eugene imposed upon Boufflers the task, difficult and exacting to an accomplished soldier and a man of honour, of fixing himself the terms of capitulation. "Whatever you think right I will agree to." Boufflers asked for a three days' truce to withdraw to the citadel, leave to send his movable sick and wounded into Douai, and that the attack upon the citadel should not be directed from the town side. Eugene, sending presents of wine and fresh provisions for the Marshal's table, subscribed to these conditions without demur. Little was lost by these gestures of chivalry. Every inducement was offered to Boufflers to state his terms for the surrender of the citadel, and when the old Marshal deprecated the raising of such unseasonable questions, Eugene began the opening of his trenches and moving his cannon even before the three days had expired. There was an unpleasant difference of opinion as to whether or not the truce precluded this. Of the garrison of fifteen thousand who had defended the fortress three thousand burghers laid down their arms upon parole, four thousand sick and wounded were carried to Douai, and between four and five thousand men retired to the citadel. The rest had perished. Besides the casualties of Wynendael and upon the communications, the Allies admitted 3632 men killed and 8322 wounded, of whom in those days about half died. The French asserted that they had inflicted more than double this loss. The price of Lille, although less than King William had paid for Namur twenty years before, was regarded as terrible throughout Europe.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE WINTER STRUGGLE

1708,  
Winter

WHILE their success was reverberating throughout Europe Marlborough and Eugene were for a space completely cut off from the outside world. The city had no sooner been surrendered than the communications with Ostend were finally closed. The garrison of Leffinghe, who had distinguished themselves by their stout resistance, were relieved on the 24th by an English, Dutch, and Spanish force. The newcomers proceeded forthwith to celebrate the joyous news in such a fashion that both officers and men were surprised drunk and incapable by a French attack during the night of the 24th, many being put to the sword. The gateways to the sea were shut, but luckily too late. The situation of the allied armies was nevertheless still precarious. In every direction lay the French fortified positions and lines. Not only the sea-coast but the entire line of the Scheldt was sealed against them by superior forces. In their midst bristled the citadel of Lille with its ample garrison, its powerful artillery, and sacredly hoarded separate reserves of ammunition. On the other hand, the greatly contracted lines of circumvallation liberated more than half the besieging army for service in the field, and both siege-works and bombardment were upon a far smaller scale.

The Treasurer gave full expression to his anxieties.

*Godolphin to Marlborough*

19th/30th Octr. 1708

\* . . . By your Ltes to Mr Erle, I see you always set much weight upon keeping of Leffinghe. You did not know it was lost, when Sr R: Temple left you, yet he tells me you expected it, wch makes me hope you have had in your thoughts how it was to bee supplied.

## THE WINTER STRUGGLE

However I cant help being uneasy to think, we are not to have any Communication wth you, but what is so very precarious as by the holland post ; how will you have your money from Antwerp or Brussels ? how will you be sure of provisions & subsistence for your Army ? Can you be secure the french will not destroy all Artois, & even Picardie too, rather than they shall furnish subsistance to your Army ? I could ask a great many more of these, wch perhaps you will call idle questions, but I must own, I should be glad to be sure they were so, and I think your business were more than half done, if you were once master of a port that could give your army a free communication wth us in England from whence you might have your money, your provisions & any other wants supplied not only with ease but wth a great deal of satisfaction. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The fall of Lille wrung further efforts from Louis XIV. He drew reinforcements both from the Rhine and Dauphiné to the Flanders theatre. Grave differences of opinion, aggravated by personal bitterness, distracted the French headquarters in the field. Berwick, without a command, had established his ascendancy over Burgundy. His keen eye and military sagacity detected every fault in Vendôme's successive projects. That Marshal was throughout very loud for battle. Whether, if he had exercised the sole command, he would in fact have fought is doubtful. But as he knew the bulk of the generals would not agree with him, that Berwick and Burgundy would overrule him, and together had greater influence at Court, he ran little risk in assuming an heroic rôle and forcing every one else to hold the only brave man back. Certain it is that Marlborough wished for nothing better on three or four separate occasions than that Vendôme should have his way. It is difficult, therefore, to believe that Vendôme's attitude, if sincere, was right.

At any rate, the French command had him well restrained. On November 3 there was a council of war at headquarters. Vendôme, as usual, clamoured for battle. His plan to attack Marlborough was vetoed. He then proposed to hold all

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

## MARLBOROUGH

the canals and rivers from Nieuport and Bruges through Ghent round to Tournai, in order to reduce the Allies to the alternative of being "starved to death or suing for peace." He might have added "or fighting." But the ill-reception of his first proposal warned him of the unwisdom of dwelling on this theme. Chamillart favoured the scheme, but Berwick mercilessly pointed out that the Allies had enough ammunition to reduce the citadel, and that, as for food, they could live far better on the plenty of Artois and Picardy than the French in war-worn Flanders. Berwick advised that serious garrisons should be left in Ghent and Bruges while the whole of the French army concentrated to cover the rich French provinces. The council decided to hold their ground and wait events. The relations of Vendôme and Berwick were now so intolerable that Berwick quietly allowed himself to be withdrawn from the main army to his original command on the Rhine. Thus a fortnight passed during which Eugene battered and bored into the citadel of Lille.

In the third week of November the Elector of Bavaria returned from the Rhine, where the armies had gone into winter quarters, and joined the princely circle at the French headquarters at Saulchoi. He had no command, but he had a plan. A renewed attack should be made upon Brussels, and he would lead it himself. The inhabitants, he declared, were his devoted subjects, and would rally to his call. The garrison was thought to be meagre, and the defences were certainly weak and defective. With a small force drawn from various neighbouring fortresses he would capture the city. The idea caught fire; it prevented other plans. The Elector, at the head of fourteen battalions and eighteen squadrons with a minor siege-train, camped at Hal on November 21, and presented himself before Brussels the next day. Marlborough's unfailing Secret Service, although he lay surrounded by the French forces, gave him warning of this enterprise almost as soon as it had been conceived. He had already some weeks before reinforced the garrison of Brussels. It now consisted of ten battalions, comprising about six thousand men. He enjoined a spirited resistance upon

## THE WINTER STRUGGLE

the governor, Colonel Pascal, an officer of exceptional quality.

At the same time he began one of those elaborate strategic farces which on several notable occasions served him so well. We have an account of this, which has not hitherto seen the daylight, from that aide-de-camp of his, Colonel Molesworth, who had saved his life at Ramillies.

\* This design of the enemy's I am credibly informed my lord Duke had private intelligence of at least six days before we de-camped from Rousselaer [Roulers], and from the moment he knew it formed the design of passing the Scheldt to prevent it, and began to take all necessary measures for that purpose. But no common methods could have been of any effect in so uncommon an undertaking, and had my Ld Duke immediately made a movement with his army towards the Schelde, the enemy had taken the alarm and been prepared for the defence on't, in which case we had found the passage impossible or must have sacrificed half our army to have effected it. Therefore the point to be labour'd for was to deceive the enemy and lead em, if possible, into an opinion that we had no such design at that time; and to bring this about orders were given for two or three days before we march't, for the carrying of all forage from the camp to Courtray and Menin. The two artillerys english and dutch marcht to Menin as to their winter quarters. The Quartermasters were sent to Courtray and order'd to take up convenient lodgings for my Ld Duke, *his family*<sup>1</sup> and equipage, and to take out billets for all the Generalls and officers of distinction; and it was given out that the army was to move to the neighbourhood of Courtray and from thence to be distributed into cantoonments where they might refresh till the Cittadell of Lille were over, and then that the passage of the canal [the Bruges canal] would certainly be attempted. This farce was so well managed that our whole army was imposed upon by it, and I'me confident all our Generalls except those few whom it was necessary to admit into the bottom of the design, really thought it was intended (as was given out) to cantoon and refresh the army for a while.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are several indications that Sarah came over to Holland shortly after the forcing of the Scheldt.

<sup>2</sup> Blenheim MSS.

## MARLBOROUGH

The sanguine hopes which the Elector, Max Emmanuel, had nourished about Brussels proved ill-founded. He summoned Colonel Pascal in imperious terms to surrender. "His Electoral Highness knows that the commandant is not in a condition to defend himself with the few troops he has ; wherefore if he obliges his Electoral Highness to begin the attack, he should not know capitulation for himself or his garrison. Let not the commandant flatter himself that he can retire with his garrison to Antwerp if he delays to surrender ; for he is to know that he will soon find troops posted to hinder his retreat." But the governor replied with some spirit, "The commandant of Brussels is very unfortunate in not having the honour of knowing Your Electoral Highness. He dares assure you that he will do all that a man of honour ought to do, that he is satisfied with his garrison, and that he has the honour, with profound respect, to be, Monseigneur, Your Electoral Highness's most humble servant."<sup>1</sup>

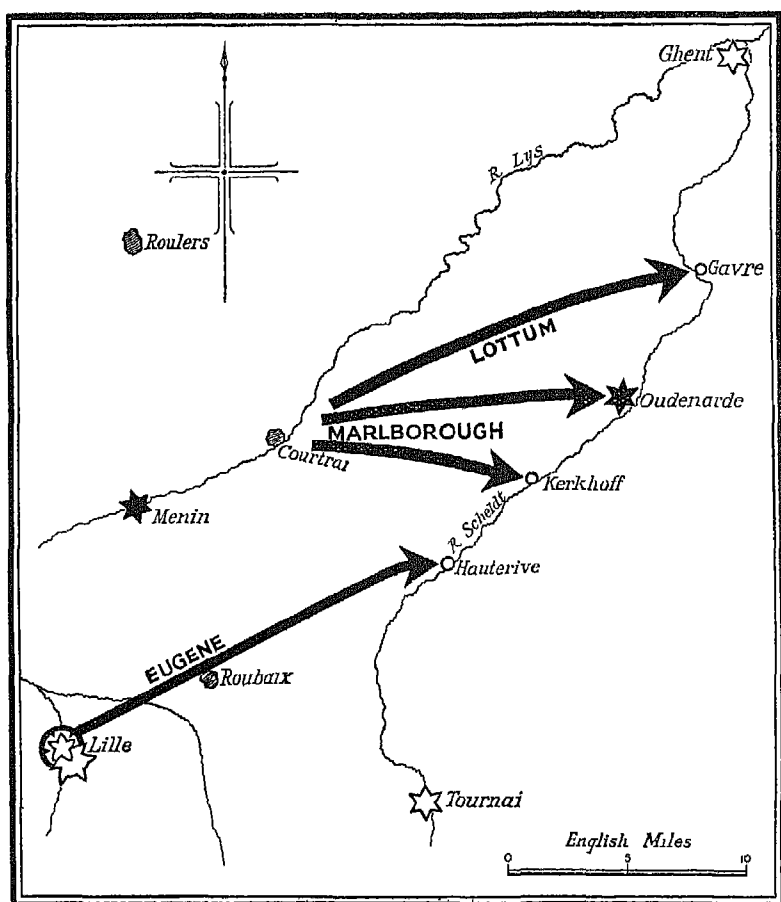
Colonel Pascal proceeded to animate his troops. He ordered a pound of flesh, two quarts of beer, and four glasses of brandy to be distributed every day gratis to each soldier. Thus fortified, the garrison resisted with vigour ; and the inhabitants remained mute and motionless. The Elector, instead of making a happy pounce, found himself committed to a grievous assault, if not, indeed, to a regular siege. He clamoured for reinforcements, and, the business having been started, these perforce had to be supplied. Bloody fighting ensued, and for a week the attempt to break into Brussels—siege it could not be called—became the feature of the campaign.

Although the French command were reassured by the news they had of Marlborough's preparations to move into winter quarters, Burgundy harboured misgivings about his own power to defend the line of the Scheldt if heavy forces were brought against him. Vendôme, on the other hand, appeared to be serenely confident, and had the misfortune to assure the King, in a letter dated the 26th, that the French positions were impregnable. The piercing of long lines by selected attacks

<sup>1</sup> Lediard, ii, 92.

## THE WINTER STRUGGLE

was familiar to Marlborough and Eugene. Nevertheless, the decision to force the fortifications of the Scheldt defended by the French main army was deemed most serious in the small



MARLBOROUGH FORCES THE SCHELDT

circle of veteran officers who were privy to it. It was a major operation which might entail heavy slaughter even if all went well. During the 26th Marlborough marched upon the river at three widely separated crossings, Gavre, Oudenarde, and Kerkhoff, while Eugene, leaving only the barest screen before



## MARLBOROUGH

the citadel, moved on Hauterive. The fortified line was seventy miles long, and the four attacks covered twenty miles of front. The principle of Marlborough's plan is explained by Captain Molesworth.

\* It was so ordered beforehand that when any one of these [four] bodies had made their passage and lodged themselves on the other side, whichever of the others met with more than ordinary difficulties and opposition should repair to the bridges of that body that had passed, and likewise make their passage there. Each body after passing was to direct its march to the right or left towards the hauteurs near Oudenarde, which was appointed to be the rendezvous of the several bodies when passed.<sup>1</sup>

When on the night of the 26th all the columns found themselves in movement towards the Scheldt a ripple of excitement spread through the hard-bitten Confederate army. We may find some comic relief and also some gleams of contemporary colour in the memoirs of Deputy Goslinga. Indeed, a patient study of his contacts with Marlborough throws a rare light upon these vanished scenes. Goslinga repaired to the Duke's tent at four in the morning when the throwing of the bridges was already in progress: "I found him in bed weary and ill, as he himself said, but sad and cast down to a far greater extent. He had just taken medicine." A little later Cadogan arrived, soon followed by Chanclos, the governor of Oudenarde, who was to accompany Count Lottum, the commander of the north column of attack. Chanclos, perfectly acquainted with the ground, would show him where the bridges could be thrown at Gavre. As usual, Goslinga, who thought that "the fate of the army and of the common cause" was at stake, had his plan to save the situation. If Count Lottum got across at Gavre he must not stop there—he must immediately turn southward and cut off the French troops masking Oudenarde. He pressed this development strongly upon the company. The Duke, whose medicine was no doubt working, "listened to him but did not make

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

## THE WINTER STRUGGLE

up his mind." In order to encourage him Goslinga volunteered to march himself with Lottum's corps. Cadogan and Chanclos kept up the conversation, while Marlborough maintained an attentive civility. Finally he indicated that the Deputy's idea must not be neglected; indeed, he would direct six battalions upon Oudenarde in order to profit by Goslinga's far-flung turning movement. This brought the Duke's trials to an end, and Goslinga departed, satisfied and thrilled. He was in no mood, so he tells us, to allow the other Dutch Deputies to share the martial honours which he foresaw. "Indeed, in their presence I gave my people orders to put my baggage and my berlin near the baggage column which should follow the princes' headquarters"; and it was only when Lottum was already some distance on his road that he found himself honoured and refreshed by the arrival of the Deputy.

Amid the mists of morning Lottum's troops made the passage near Gavre with little or no opposition. But there Lottum halted. Goslinga at once exhorted him to march upon the rear of Oudenarde. The general drew him into a neighbouring house. Here, to his intense disgust, Goslinga discovered the two other Dutch Deputies whom he thought he had shaken off. A long debate ensued. Lottum said he had his orders from the Duke. He was to cross at Gavre and wait at Gavre. Goslinga declared he had it from the Duke's own mouth that he should hurry on to Oudenarde. Lottum refused to budge. He said politely that the Deputy was right, but he could not depart from his instructions. Goslinga, exasperated, appealed to the other Deputies to give a formal command:

But my two colleagues, God only knows the reason, although I suspect it only too well and attribute it to a damnable jealousy, said that they would not act: that Count Lottum was the general; that it was for him to know what orders he had received from the Duke, and that they would not countermand them.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing would shake these obstinate men. Orkney—our dashing Orkney—joined with Count Lottum in pressing

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 88.

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Goslinga's plan, but alas, the other two Deputies would not consent to give the necessary order, and without that they could not depart from their instructions. Then at last did Goslinga begin to realize that he had been fooled. We can see the scene in this cottage room: three or four of the most experienced soldiers in the army, trusted lieutenants in Marlborough's near circle, and this officious civilian lecturing them on their duty while his two colleagues, sent for that express purpose, paralysed his authority and left him a laughing-stock, or would have done so had his mischief-making powers not inspired a more elaborate procedure. Here, then, thought Goslinga, was another of Marlborough's tricks to prolong the war and line his pockets by depriving a Dutch Deputy "of an occasion so finely to serve Holland." It was not till the afternoon, while they were still at loggerheads, that Marlborough's aide-de-camp came with news that the Scheldt had been forced at all points with very little resistance and that Lottum was to march on Oudenarde.

We have dwelt upon this trifling incident because it illustrates the conditions under which Marlborough and his officers had to toil. The essence of his plan was to make sure at all costs of any bridgehead taken. Lottum led the flank column, and there were important French forces about Ghent. It may well be that with greater latitude Lottum could have done more that morning; but if every column commander had been accorded a similar discretion the clock-work precision of the operation might have been destroyed.

By the afternoon of the 27th the whole French army was chased from the fortifications of the Scheldt. Some fell back on Ghent and the rest on Tournai. The position of the Elector of Bavaria at Brussels became at once forlorn. Saving himself at the loss of all his artillery, and leaving eight hundred wounded behind him, he escaped to Mons. Meanwhile the strong post of Saint-Ghislain, which he had denuded of its garrison for the siege of Brussels, was captured by a raid of the governor of Ath, and many troops and much time and trouble were required to recover it for France. The moment the passage of the river was known to be secured

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Eugene hastened back to reinforce his scattered cordon around the citadel of Lille. The whole of this swift and fine operation marks the ascendancy which the Allies under Marlborough and Eugene had gained over the still numerically superior French armies. The fate of the citadel was now only a question of days. By this operation Marlborough had not only relieved Brussels, but had reopened the eastern line of supply to the besiegers of Lille and to the country in which his troops must winter. The morale of the French army had suffered a further shock. On December 9 the citadel of Lille capitulated. Boufflers marched out with honours of war, never more justly earned, and with the remnants of his garrison retired into France.

When the news of the loss of the Scheldt, of the failure before Brussels, and of the surrender of the citadel of Lille reached Louis XIV, he was so mortified that he incontinently ordered his armies to abandon the field and disperse into winter quarters. To protract the campaign further into the depth of winter no doubt meant a severe disorganization of all the recruiting and recuperative processes upon which the efficiency of his armies must depend in the new year which scowled upon France. It was believed at Versailles that Ghent and Bruges could stand prolonged sieges, and that the Allies would find it impossible to continue fighting incessantly. They too would have to break up, and by the late spring of 1709 the grim board might be set afresh. But this decision took little account of the forfeits which must be paid when one side ceases fighting and the other continues. Vendôme protested violently. The King remained obdurate. Berwick makes the pithy comment, "It is astounding that the King should have agreed to all the Duke of Vendôme's extraordinary proposals during the campaign, and should then have persisted in rejecting the only reasonable one he had made."<sup>1</sup>

One final, vital stroke was required to complete this glorious, remorseless campaign. The French must be driven from Ghent and Bruges. With a piercing eye Goslinga discerned the obvious. "While we were in this camp [on the

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, ii, 53.

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Dender] to cover the convoys, I said to the Duke one day that I feared very much that, if the enemy remained in possession of Ghent," the opening of the next campaign would be impeded. "The Duke listened to what I said with attention; he said that he would ponder over it maturely and asked me to come back the next day to thrash it out anew."<sup>1</sup> When on the morrow at eight o'clock the Deputy repaired to the Duke's quarters, he was received by Cadogan, who seemed very ready to be convinced in favour of the project. Thus fortified, Goslinga pressed the plan upon the Commander-in-Chief as soon as he emerged from his bedroom. If Marlborough was a good general, he was also a consummate actor. Like Cadogan, but more slowly, he yielded his mind gradually to Goslinga's audacious plan; and finally he adopted it. Goslinga, thrilled, full of having given this important turn to strategy, hurried off to write enthusiastically to The Hague in its support, leaving Marlborough and his Quartermaster-General to exchange smiles and confidences which can readily be imagined. The historian Klopp, who adopts every word of Goslinga as if it were the Bible, writes, "Field-Deputy Goslinga suggested to Marlborough the idea of rounding off the work of this campaign by the recapture of Ghent and Bruges."<sup>2</sup> However, the reader will remember that on August 2 Marlborough had written to Godolphin: "If we can succeed in our undertakings we must not think of winter quarters till we have obliged him [Vendôme] to quit that country [Ghent and Bruges]."<sup>3</sup> And on August 20, "When I wrote you that I must drive the French from Ghent and Bruges I had no other thought than that it was absolutely necessary for the common cause."<sup>4</sup> Molesworth, the Duke's aide-de-camp, writing to his brother (December 3), says:

I do not think it improbable that we may cantoon our horse, and that our infantry finish this prodigious campaign with the reduction of Ghent and Bruges. . . . Upon the whole I must tell you I can hardly flatter myself with the hope of keeping this

<sup>1</sup> Goslinga, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Coxe, iv, 172.

<sup>2</sup> Klopp, xiii, 158

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

## THE WINTER STRUGGLE

Christmas with my friends in England, but I wish them a happy one with all my heart. We must yet give the finishing stroke to the campaign. Then, if you do not caress us excessively when we come amongst you, and say we have done like honest fellows, you do us wrong. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Having long held these intentions, it was no doubt most agreeable to Marlborough to see the officious Deputy going forward with the plan as if it were his own, and to make him its spontaneous advocate with the Dutch. No doubt it was a help for him to be able to say to the members of the Dutch Government or the States-General, "Goslinga's plan is sound. We should be culpable if we neglected it." How right was Goslinga when he described Marlborough as a man of "extreme dissimulation"! How glad must Marlborough have been to find this insufferable pest volunteering to pull the cart forward in the right direction! The incident illustrates Marlborough's method of using the foibles, the vanities, the virtues, and the vices of those with whom he had to work to further his own designs. He made even enemies work for him and for the victory of the Allies without their knowing it. Let us, then, proceed to Goslinga's master-stroke, the regaining of Ghent and Bruges.

Within an hour of Boufflers's surrender at Lille Marlborough began his concentration against Ghent. The French garrison consisted of thirty-four battalions and nineteen squadrons well supplied. The population of eighty thousand dreaded the siege, declared they would observe neutrality, and begged Marlborough not to bombard the city. The Duke could give them no comfort. On the 11th he approached; but in view of the strength of the place and its garrison he decided that Eugene must aid and cover him. Accordingly on December 16-17 Eugene marched north to the neighbourhood of Grammont, and sent his infantry forward to the siege. On the 18th Ghent was invested. The weather was obliging. Hitherto the frost had been intense, but now a sudden thaw without any rain freed the waterways for the barges carrying the siege cannon. On the 24th the trenches

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

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were opened; on the 27th Fort Rouge, on the north, was captured, and by this time the batteries were planted. There was no reason why Ghent should not have stood a prolonged siege, but the disheartenment of the French armies produced a surprising collapse. To the indignation of the King, Count de la Motte on the 29th opened negotiations. In his justification before a French court-martial he pleaded that his supreme duty was to preserve his army. Marlborough's judgment was thus expressed: "I believe Monsieur de Lamotte will not be able to give good reason for what he has done."<sup>1</sup> Following La Motte's example and orders, Grimaldi evacuated Bruges, Plassendael, and Leffinghe. All the French troops withdrew along the coast upon Dunkirk. The very next day the weather broke completely; it poured, and Marlborough dispersed the allied armies to their winter quarters.

*John to Sarah*

*Dec: 17th, 1708*

\* . . . If You have had the same weather we have had, it has been so very cold that it must have done You hurt, for it has frozen so excessive hard that the rivers have been al shut up, so that we cou'd have nothing come to us, which if it had continu'd must have oblig'd us to have gone to our Garrisons; but I thank God we have now a gentle thaw, by which I hope the rivers will in a few days bring us our canon and amunition. The french knowing the consequence of this town have now in itt 30 Battalions and 19 Squadrons, so that I have desir'd the assistance of the foot of Pr. Eugenes army, which will be with me to morrow, and then I shall invest the place on all sides. The french hope by their numerous garrison to make such a defence, and by the advantage thay have of the season that we shall be forced to raise the siege, but my hopes are that God will enable us to deceive them, for to be in some quiet this Winter, and to enable the making a good Campagne the next Yeare, wee must be masters of this town. I have had this evening a Deputation from the Clergy Nobillity and Citizens of the town in the Name of al the people, desiring thay might not

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough to Godolphin, Brussels, January 7.

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be bombard'd ; with all my hart I wish it cou'd be taken without doing hurt, but in kindness to our own soldiers we must use all means for the reducing in the shortest time.<sup>1</sup>

*John to Sarah*

*Dec: 31st, 1708*

I write yesterday by the Expresse I sent by the Way of Ostend to lett You know that the Comte de la Motte had capitulated to march out of Gand next wensday if not succord sooner. The Marishal Boufflair is at Tournay, but we do not hear he has troupes enough to do that service ; I have this morning write to the Governor and Town of Bridges [Bruges] to offer them the same Capitulations I have given to this place, but I fear thay will only return a Civill answe're, and oblige me to march with part of the Army thether which if possible [I] wou'd avoyd, especially now that it lookes like weat weather, the rain having begone yesterday, and God having hethertoo bless'd us with extreme good weather, we may now reasonably exspect a great deal of rain. My next letter will lett You know what I shall be oblig'd to do, for if I do not go to Bridges, I shall then go for two or three days to The Hague with Pr. Eugene, and then return to this country, where I must continu' til the end of februarie ; the months of March and April, will be under the care of the Pr. of Savoye [Eugene]. By this You will see that I shall enjoye but a very little time with my dear Soull this Winter in England. If we must have Warr next summer, I do hope that the taking of these two towns will oblige the Enemy to wish for a Peace. I have this minute receiv'd Yours of the 14th but have not time to say more by this post, then that mr Bromleys and other Gentlemen's good nature join'd with the trouble I have here makes me quit weary of serving.<sup>2</sup>

*Marlborough to Godolphin*

*GHENT*

*January 3, 1708[9]*

I was yesterday from ten in the morning till six at night seeing the garrison of Ghent and all that belong'd to them march by me. It is astonishing to see so great numbers of good men to look on, suffer a place of this consequence to be taken at this season with so little a loss. As soon as they knew I had possession

<sup>1</sup> Blenheim MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Sarah Correspondence*, i, 164.



## MARLBOROUGH

of the gates of this town, they took the resolution of abandoning Bridges. *This campaign is now ended to my own heart's desire*, and as the hand of the Almighty is visible in this whole matter, I hope her Majesty will think it due to Him to return public thanks, and at the same time to implore His blessing on the next campaign. I can't express enough to you the importance of these two towns, for without them we could neither be quiet in our winter quarters nor have opened with advantage the next campaign. I shall to-morrow give the necessary orders for the separating the army, so that in two days they will be all on their march for their winter quarters. I must go with Prince Eugene for some few days to The Hague, after which I shall take a little care of my health. . . .<sup>1</sup>

A result of the first importance was also achieved in the south. The land campaign in the Peninsula, as, indeed, in Dauphiné, was comparatively uneventful. The new Imperialist commander, Starhemberg, landed with four thousand reinforcements at Barcelona in April, and on the arrival of Stanhope and the English contingent took the field in the following month. The operations centred around the fortress of Tortosa, on the Ebro, now became one of the last Ally strongholds in Eastern Spain. Starhemberg was unable to prevent its fall on July 10. When his main body of some six thousand troops eventually arrived from Italy he attempted, in conjunction with Stanhope, its recapture. This effort miscarried dismally, and with it closed the military operations of the campaign. The armies settled down in winter quarters in almost the same positions as they had occupied at the opening of the year. The French had, however, lost nearly five thousand men in the fighting at Tortosa, and had been seriously weakened by the withdrawal of troops for Flanders after the battle of Oudenarde.

It was, however, at sea that the decisive event took place. The possession of Gibraltar enabled the Allies to prevent the junction of the Brest and Toulon fleets; but up till now heavy ships had been forced to sail to Lisbon every winter to refit. We recall Marlborough's exhortation to Stanhope,

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, IV, 298.



GENERAL JAMES STANHOPE  
*By permission of Earl Stanhope*



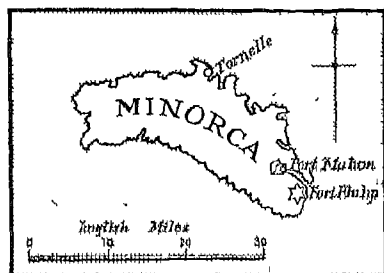
## THE WINTER STRUGGLE

"I conjure you . . . to take Port Mahon."<sup>1</sup> Earlier (June 1708) he had written :

You know I am sufficiently convinced of the necessity of a squadron wintering in the Mediterranean, but it is certain all our seamen are against it, alleging the men of war cannot be secure and have all the necessities to keep them at sea in the port of Spczzia, so that you must continue to press this matter as of the greatest consequence, advising the King to do the same.<sup>2</sup>

The whole plan depended upon naval co-operation. Sir John Leake had succeeded the ill-fated Shovell in January 1708. During the summer

he had been active. He had fed the army in the Peninsula, transported the Imperialist reinforcements, had fetched Charles III's Wolfenbuttcl bride, captured the island of Sardinia with its valuable corn supplies (August 1708), and now was free to attack



Minorca. For this, however, troops were necessary. Stanhope provided seventeen hundred men, who were embarked at Barcelona. A rendezvous with Leake was arranged off Minorca, and the squadrons met on September 14. To Leake might have fallen the honour of the event. However, with the gale weather approaching he refused to hazard the fleet. Leaving Admiral Whittaker with seventeen ships to aid the land operations, he sailed for England. Stanhope was undaunted. His arrival off the island led to the surrender of the whole place except Port Mahon. This longed-for harbour was defended by the strong Fort Philip, garrisoned by a thousand men. Stanhope landed his troops and guns, and prepared for a regular siege. But on September 30, after a week of reconnoitring, the garrison surrendered to an offer of good terms. With the fall of this main defence the harbour was soon occupied, and thus, at a cost of less than

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatches*, iv, f. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Chevening MSS. (Stanhope family papers); B. Williams, *Stanhope*, p. 72.

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fifty killed and wounded, the English fleet secured their coveted base in the Mediterranean. To Stanhope belongs the credit, and it certainly seems that the admirals were not so forward in the capture of this great naval prize as might have been expected. "I may in confidence," wrote Stanhope somewhat bitterly to Sunderland, "tell your lordship that I have in all this affair met with ten times more difficulty in dealing with the sea [officers] than with the enemy."

Henceforward the English fleet had a secure, unapproachable island base in the Mediterranean, and their command of the inland sea became perennial. The importance attached to the possession of Minorca by the soldiers, sailors, and statesmen of all parties in England became a continuing tradition which fifty years later, when the island was lost, explained the pitiless execution of Admiral Byng. To Marlborough in 1708 the capture of Port Mahon was the achievement of a major strategic aim decisive upon the future course of the war.

Thus ended, according to his "heart's desire," Marlborough's grand campaign of 1708. Throughout the supreme command had rested unquestioned in his hands. He often deferred to Eugene's advice, and the two commanders always presented themselves in full agreement. Marlborough's decisions, supported by Eugene, were accepted invariably by the councils of war. The noble Prince not only served and aided, but inspired Marlborough in anxious days. But the responsibility and authority rested with the Duke, and five-sixths of the troops in the field were under his own command. Success was joyously shared between the two, but failure would have fallen upon Marlborough alone. Constantly ailing in health, reduced once to despair, gnawed by his political anxieties at home, harassed by every kind of pressure and appeal from Godolphin, Sarah, and the Whig leaders, conscious of his waning favour with the Queen, pursued by the inveterate malice of the Tory Party, he nevertheless continuously took great risks, and wished to take more.

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The answer to the innumerable criticisms passed upon his operations must be their complete success. While always audacious, in every case he made the most careful plans based upon wonderfully accurate information. He had studied attentively the character of his chief opponent, Vendôme. He realized quickly the divergence of view among the French commanders, and played upon it. From the battle of Oudenarde onward he was sure that the morale of the French army was broken. Weighing all these factors and making his plans, he did not allow himself to be distracted by the closing of his communications or converging superior forces. He was unaffected by the terrible appearance of the war-map. Although baulked in his design of marching into France, he contrived to produce outstanding success by a second alternative. He persevered, undaunted by hazards, unsatisfied by victory, until every antagonist and almost every adherent was worn down by physical and mental strain, and he was left unchallenged master of the whole theatre of war. "I think," he wrote to Sarah on December 10, "we may say without vanity that France will with terror remember this campaign for a long time."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### CULMINATION

1708,  
Winter

ENGLAND had now been raised by Marlborough's victories to the summit of the world. Many living men could remember the island as a paid dependant of France. The Constitution and the religion of the nation had repeatedly lain under mortal challenge. Only twenty years before, with Ireland in rebellion and Scotland separate and estranged, the English people, led by the aristocracy, had been reduced to the desperate remedy of bringing in a foreign ruler and foreign troops to protect them against betrayal by their own sovereign and invasion by Louis XIV. Even after the wars of William III, as it seemed but yesterday, the nation, disarmed by an insensate economy, had quaked to see the Grand Monarch occupying without the firing of a shot all the fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands, and adding, apparently without opposition, the mighty empire of Spain and the Indies to the already paramount and overweening power of France. Protestantism and Parliamentary institutions crouched behind the dykes of Holland or stood ill-guarded and downcast beyond the Strait of Dover. The discordant petty states of Germany could make no headway against the gleaming arms and all-embracing diplomacy of France. Not only European hegemony, but even the dominion of the whole world seemed about to fall to a glorified, triumphant, Catholic ruler, as intolerant as he was cultured, as cruel and ambitious as he was strong, and sole autocrat of twenty million Frenchmen.

One man and three battles had transformed all. The Grand Monarch was beaten to his knees. His armies would no longer face in the open field the men who had conquered at Blenheim, Ramillies, and Oudenarde, or the Commander who led them. The whole of the Netherlands, all their

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fortresses, had been regained, and now stood as the barrier of salvation for world causes dear to Dutch and English hearts. The three parts of the British Isles were united under one Queen and one Parliament. The French fleets had been driven from the seas. The Mediterranean had become an English lake. The treasures of the ocean, the wonders of the New World, seemed to be the appointed inheritance of the islanders.

An intense desire to take part in these splendid events inspired the nobility, the country gentlemen, and even the city merchants. There was a galaxy of talent at the disposal of the Crown. Not merely profit, though profit there was in plenty, but even more fame and the chance to attempt great deeds, allured with their magnetic spell ability and rank. Eloquence in Parliament, valour in the field or afloat, wealth, broad acres, ancient lineage, bore the eager competitors to the arena. Political intrigue, party faction, royal favour, prescribed the conditions of their strife for power. The Continent laboured to understand the English political system. The eyes of Europe were fixed upon the Court of Queen Anne. Every word, every whisper, every gesture, every combination or counter-combination of the leading figures of British public life, were eagerly reported. Above all, the minutest indications of the Queen's mood and leanings were reported far and wide. The persons she saw, the bishops she made, the honours she bestowed, the jewels she chose to wear, the bedchamber women who presented them to her—all these were scrutinized by rulers of a score of states with as much attention as was paid to the march of a substantial corps from one theatre to another.

We have seen by what narrow margins, against what adverse chances, the Grand Alliance had three times been rescued by Marlborough's war and policy from ignominious collapse. The external difficulties were now virtually at an end. With Eugene at his side, his military command was undisputed. The princes and sovereigns of the Grand Alliance had in general yielded themselves to his leadership.



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From The Hague, from Hanover, from Berlin, from Vienna, from Turin, from Barcelona, all roads led to his tent. The Russian excursion of Charles XII had removed that formidable irrelevancy from the scene. To dictate terms of peace to France, either upon her frontiers or in Paris itself, seemed a prospect near and sure. But now a new and fatal burden was bound upon those shoulders which had borne so much. The Queen's heart, it was said, was changing. The Captain-General and his wife were losing—nay, had lost—the favour they had used to such effect. The Tories, the peace party, the Jacobite party, were gaining in royal favour. Henceforth the Court of Louis XIV pondered the question, If reasonable peace is denied, can France hold out till Marlborough falls? Thus every scrap of gossip about Queen Anne, about her relations with Sarah and Abigail, about Mr Harley and the back stairs, about Whig obtrusiveness and Godolphin's helplessness, exercised its influence both upon the conduct of the war and every peace negotiation. Queen Anne was the axis upon which the fate of Europe turned: and Queen Anne had now become her own worst enemy.

As the meeting of Parliament approached the Whigs professed themselves highly discontented with the exertions which Godolphin, Marlborough, and even Sarah—who had broken herself in their interests—had made to bring them into office. Sunderland was deputed to inform the Duchess that unless Lord Somers received promotion, and unless Law Officers more agreeable to their party were appointed, they would withdraw their support. Sarah passed this on to Marlborough, besieging Lille, and did her best herself. When it was seen that she no longer had any influence with the Queen some of the Whig lords even stooped to make their court, with poor success, to Abigail. They realized that Marlborough alone still possessed exploitable credit with the Queen. They therefore sought to spur him to their service by renewing the attack upon his brother, which had been called off at the beginning of the year. Whether or not Admiral Churchill was vulnerable in his

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financial record, or in his naval administration, he was certainly obnoxious to them as a politician. The Admiral had during the year stimulated the Toryism of his chief, Prince George of Denmark, and given full vent to his own. He had embarrassed Godolphin and Marlborough by circulating the report that the Duke had given a regiment to a certain Colonel Jones at the instigation of Harley. He had cited the Secretary-at-War, Walpole, as his authority for this. Much mischief was made thereby. He meddled besides in the intrigues about Oxford patronage. Sarah became deeply incensed against him. In vehement letters she importuned her husband to free himself of a brother who had become an encumbrance. For a long time Marlborough resisted. He was attached to his brother George, through whom he controlled naval strategy. He yielded only to the arguments of Godolphin.

### *Godolphin to Marlborough*

June 11/22, 1708

The case with the Prince is little better. He is sometimes uneasy at the apprehensions of what he shall meet with, but unadvisable in what is proper to prevent it; whether from his own temper, or made so by your brother, I cannot judge. But your brother is not, at least seems not to be, without his own uneasiness too, in which I always confirm him when we talk together, and he appears to be upon those occasions very much of my mind; however, he has great animosities and partialities, and either cannot, or will not prevail with the Prince to do any good.<sup>1</sup>

### *John to Sarah*

August 2, 1708

I am sorry that my brother George is gone to Oxford, fearing he may do what I shall not like. I can't hinder being concerned for him, though I find he is not at all sensible of the trouble he is like to have this winter, so that I shall certainly have mortifications upon his account.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 89.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

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*Godolphin to Marlborough*

WINDSOR  
July 6/17, 1708

You may do me the right to observe that I never trouble you with stories from hence, being sensible I ought not to make you uneasy, upon whom all our hopes and safeties depend. But since you required an account of the noise about your brother George and Mr Walpole, I cannot but think he was very much to blame in that whole affair from the beginning to the end; but nobody is able to give so exact an account of the particulars as Mr Craggs, who was himself a witness to the most material part of it. I must needs add, upon this occasion, that your brother does certainly contribute very much to keep up both in the Prince and in the Queen the natural, but very inconvenient averseness they have to the Whigs in general, and to Sir George Byng in particular, though Mr Montgomey took all imaginable pains to reconcile them, and to give promises and assurances to each other; and nothing is more certain than that the general dislike of your brother in that station is stronger than ever, and much harder to be supported; but nothing less than your express command should have made me say so much to you upon so disagreeable a subject.<sup>1</sup>

It was not till October that Marlborough was finally convinced that his brother must go. Then he wrote him a truly devastating letter.

*Marlborough to Admiral Churchill*

October 19, 1708

Finding you still continue in the Prince's council, and the Parliament now so near, I cannot be so wanting either to you or to myself as not to tell you plainly, with all the kindness of a brother and the sincerity of a friend, that if you do not take an unalterable resolution of laying down that employment before the Parliament sits, you will certainly do the greatest disservice imaginable to the Queen and Prince, the greatest prejudice to me, and bring yourself into such inconveniences as may last as long as you live, and from which it is wholly impossible to protect you. Whereas, on the other side, if the considerations of making the Queen's affairs more easy next session, of avoiding a great deal of trouble and disagreeableness to the Prince, and of real

<sup>1</sup> *Sarah Correspondence*, ii, 288.

## CULMINATION

danger to yourself, as well as prejudice to me, prevail with you to comply with my earnest desire in this thing, I think I could be answerable to you that you could not fail of finding your advantage in it, doubly to what you do now, both in profit and quiet. These motives being all of them as strong as it is possible for me to suggest, I hope you will give me the satisfaction of letting me know very soon, that my mind may be at ease in this matter, and that you have virtually laid down before my coming over.<sup>1</sup>

Both Marlborough and Godolphin hoped that the sacrifice of the Admiral would placate the Whigs and spare the Queen the distress of a Parliamentary attack upon George of Denmark. All through this summer the Prince had lain grievously ill in the little house the Queen had occupied at Windsor. Here she and Abigail nursed him with every care. The poor Prince "had his astma, a spitting of blood, a lethargie, a hidropsie and something of a palsie."<sup>2</sup> The summer of 1708 was hot, and the Prince suffered much in the small house from the weather, from his maladies, and no doubt from the remedies of those days. The house was backed upon the park, and, according to Sarah, gave easy access to Harley, who was frequently admitted by Abigail to the Queen.

Who can wonder at Anne's hatred of the Whigs, whose cruelty and greed of employment sought to hound her stricken husband out of place and reputation. Her sorrow as a wife, her wrath as Queen, were flames that fed each other. Heedless of this, and, indeed, of every decency, but strong in their sense of constitutional injustice, the Whig lords expanded their claims. Nothing would now content them but the removal of the Prince, the transference of Lord Pembroke to the Admiralty, the distribution of Pembroke's existing offices to Somers and Wharton. Sunderland collected the Junto leaders at Althorp in October to concert their demands. In the Lords Haversham excelled himself: "Your disasters at sea have been so many a man scarce knows where to begin. Your ships have been taken by your enemies, as the Dutch

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, IV, 316-37.

<sup>2</sup> Marlborough Papers, H.M.C., p. 469.

## MARLBOROUGH

have your herrings by shoals, upon your own coasts ; nay, these are pregnant misfortunes, and big with innumerable mischiefs." The Whigs believed this was their only way. They struck at Marlborough through his brother and at the Queen through her husband. Their calculations were proved correct, their methods efficacious. To spare her husband's last days from pitiless public attack, Anne flung the hungry Whigs their offices. What she would not give to Marlborough's wise and loyal counsel, to Godolphin's entreaties, and to the obvious facts of the Parliamentary situation, she yielded to this peculiarly mean form of personal pressure. "The Queen," wrote Godolphin to Marlborough on the day Anne surrendered (October 22/November 2),

has at last been brought to allow me to make such condescensions, which, if done in time, would have been sufficient to have eased most of our difficulties ; and would yet do it, in great measure, if the Whigs will be but tolerably reasonable ; and I am really of opinion that if you were in England at this moment but forty-eight hours, all might yet go well—I mean as to the public.<sup>1</sup>

The Junto were indignant to find that after the promise had been extorted its fulfilment was delayed. On October 28 they learned the cause. Death had discharged the Lord High Admiral from his office. "... Nature," wrote Godolphin,

was quite worn out in him, and no art could support him long. The Queen's affliction and the difficulty of speaking with that freedom and plainness to her which her service requires, while she has so tender a concern upon her is a new additional inconvenience, which our circumstances did not need, and will make it more necessary than ever that you should not delay your return to England ; for I really foresee that unless that can be compassed very, very soon, it will be next to impossible to prevent ruin. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The crisis had, however, passed. The Whigs obtained their posts. The office of Lord High Admiral was put into

<sup>1</sup> Cox, iv, 318.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-319.



PRINCE GEORGE OF DENMARK

From an engraving after a painting by William Wissinow



## CULMINATION

commission under Pembroke. Wharton, from whom Anne had once so summarily demanded his staff on account of his evil character, went to Ireland as her Lord-Lieutenant; and Somers became Lord President. Thus in the teeth of the Queen, somewhat to the concern of the country, but in accord with the will of the House of Commons, a characteristically Whig party Administration was installed in power. The events of the next four years were to make this expedient the rule for the future. A memorable milestone in British constitutional history had been passed.

Admiral Churchill's appointment lapsed with the death of the Prince. "He continues in town," wrote one of Harley's correspondents, "till the funeral is over, and then retires to Windsor with the intention not to appear this winter in Parliament."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he never appeared in Parliament again. He retired to a villa which he had built himself at Windsor, and amused himself for the remaining eighteen months of his life with a remarkable aviary, which he bequeathed to the Duke of Ormonde and the Earl of Torrington. He does not seem to have amassed a large fortune; but he was able to leave twelve thousand pounds to his natural son, and the like sum to his nephew Brigadier Godfrey.<sup>2</sup> He had been the mainspring of the Admiralty for seven war-time years, when the British fleets were stronger than all other navies combined, and when they were used more whole-heartedly in support of the main strategy than at any other period in our naval history.

Neither Sarah nor, indeed, the doctors had realized how rapid Prince George of Denmark's end would be, but when she heard that his condition had become critical she wrote:

WINDSOR LODGE  
*Oct. 26*

Though the last time I had the honour to wait upon your Majesty your usage of me was such as was scarce possible for me to imagine, or for anybody to believe, yet I cannot hear of so great a misfortune and affliction to you as the condition in which the

<sup>1</sup> Lewis to Hailey, November 2; Portland Papers, *H.M.C.*, iv, 510.

<sup>2</sup> Luttrell, vi, 58.



## MARLBOROUGH

Prince is without coming to pay my duty, in inquiring after your health ; and to see if in any particular whatsoever, my service can either be agreeable or useful to you, for which satisfaction I would do more than I will trouble your Majesty to read at this time.<sup>1</sup>

This letter grates upon the ear, and it is not surprising that when the next day Sarah, who had driven all night from Windsor, presented herself at Kensington, she was, as she records, received "very coolly, and like a stranger," by the afflicted Queen. She returned, however, the next day and was present at the moment of the Prince's death. Archdeacon Coxe, writing for the England of 1820, says :

She again waited on the Queen the ensuing morning. With affectionate zeal she removed her royal mistress from this sad spectacle to her closet, and desiring the other attendants to withdraw, she knelt down, and endeavoured to soothe the agonies of her grief, continuing in that posture till the first emotions had subsided.<sup>2</sup>

Such rigmarole probably does justice to what occurred. Sarah was in a false position. She would have been universally condemned if she had abandoned her mistress and former beloved friend in her grief ; yet her presence could only be an intrusion. One person alone in the whole world could be of any comfort to Anne. It was to Abigail she turned. She suffered herself to be led and advised by Sarah, whose duty it was ; but she only wanted Abigail. Sarah directed affairs with her customary precision. The Queen must leave Kensington for St James's in order that the funeral arrangements should be made. Anne, reluctant to quit her husband's body, resisted feebly for a while and then submitted. The Duchess, putting aside the Queen's requests for Abigail by saying, "Your Majesty may send for her at St James's, when and how you please," conducted her in her own coach to that palace.

No fault can be found with Sarah's behaviour on this difficult occasion. It was correct, capable, and considerate ;

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, iv, 321.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

## CULMINATION

but on neither side was there a spark of loving companionship. All that was dead. Even its afterglow ended with the breath of the poor Prince. He had always been a good friend to Sarah and a staunch admirer of the Duke. Now he too was gone. Sarah in her memoirs wrote of her relations with the Queen in the succeeding weeks :

She would make me sit down as formerly and make some little show of kindness at night when I took my leave ; but she would never speak to me of anything, and I found I could gain no ground, which was not to be wondered at, for I never came to her without finding Mrs Masham had just gone from her, and I went to her seldom.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah's behaviour would lie under no reproach but for her subsequent writings upon these events. She thought fit to record that the Queen, in spite of her grief, "ate a very good dinner" on the day of her husband's death. When Anne took the habit of sitting alone for long hours in her husband's little workroom at St James's Palace, she made a reflection which does only herself discredit. "But the true reason of her Majesty choosing this closet to sit in was that the backstairs belonging to it came from Mrs Masham's lodgings, who by that means could secretly bring to her whom she pleased."<sup>2</sup> These aspersions, uninspiring as thoughts, unpleasant as statements, recoil upon their author when contrasted with one of Anne's scribbled notes to Sarah :

I scratched twice at dear Mrs Freeman's door, as soon as Lord Treasurer went from me, in hopes to have spoke one more word to him before he was gone ; but, nobody hearing me, I wrote this, not caring to send what I had to say by word of mouth ; which was, to desire him that when he sends his orders to Kensington he would give directions there may be a great many Yeomen of the Guards to carry the Prince's dear body, that it may not be let fall, the great stairs being very steep and slippery.<sup>3</sup>

When Archdeacon Coxe says of this that it "marks the Queen's minute attention to all the details of the interment"

<sup>1</sup> *Sarah Correspondence*, i, 415-416.

<sup>2</sup> *Conduct*, p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> Coxe, iv, 324.

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he also seems to fall below the level of feelings which simple folk understand.

Low, low lay the Tories in the trough of misfortune after Harley's fall. Harley's ordeal, until Greg's dying breath had exonerated him, had been shattering. That at least was over; but he had quitted office and the Court to find his party split into at least three sections, each abusing the other, and all laying the blame of their plight upon him. The Jacobite attempted invasion ruined Tory prospects at the polls. Mauled and diminished, they awaited the meeting of a Parliament where, for the first time during the reign, the Whigs would be masters. St John, seatless, buried himself in the country. Harley was returned; but to a scene how changed! For nearly a decade he had practically led the House of Commons, either from the Speaker's Chair or as Secretary of State. All that time he had been its principal figure. Now, stripped of his official trappings, without a majority to support or even a party to cheer him, and lacking the power of dramatic and eloquent speech by which an individual position can be maintained, his prospects seemed at first forlorn.

But Harley's political knowledge taught him that a healing process would soon begin in the Tory Opposition. Common misfortunes would beget a common partisanship. He felt sure the party would come back to him. He knew its great strength if united. Meanwhile, as was notorious—and notorious to his advantage—he was, through Abigail, in the closest contact with the Queen. Abigail signalled her loyalties and information in her own cryptic way.

### *Abigail Masham to Harley*

*April 18th, 1708*

I was at Court this day, and if I have any skill in physiognomy, my old mistress is not pleased with me. I told you 'twas my thought on Thursday night. If I guess right am to seek why 'tis so. My Lady Giggster [?] was there very gay and seemed extremely at ease. Ailligo's mother [?] was also there. I was asked by a very sensible man and one that knows Courts whether any or all of

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us four were not with my old mistress when she last was in town. The reason for the question I had not, and the answer I made you may guess. I shan't go till Thursday; therefore you may be sure I shall wait on you first.<sup>1</sup>

July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1708

I repent heartily my telling my aunt [the Queen] the reason why I desired to go to Walton [London], but did not question having leave, as I told you in my last. I thank you for your kind advice, and I hope God Almighty will give me more grace than to be taken in any of their snares. I am very ready to believe they will try all ways to ruin me, but they shall never do it by any indirect action of my own. If theirs will take effect against me, God's will be done: I must submit to what He permits. Oh, my poor aunt Stephens is to be pitied very much, for they press her harder than ever. Since what happened lately she is altered more than is to be imagined; no ready money [courage] at all to supply her with common necessities. Really I see it so bad and they come so fast upon her I have no hopes of her deliverance, for she will put it quite out of her friends' power to save her. I have heard of the court they make to Mrs Packer [Hanover family] from several people and *told her all*; while she is leaving it, she is very melancholy, but says little to the matter.

My Lady Pye [Duchess of Marlborough] is here still. I have not seen my aunt since my duty called me, which was Saturday and Sunday in the morning; to-morrow I go again to do my duty. I don't think it any unkindness in my aunt, but because my Lady Pye is here. My friend that is gone the journey you need not fear will be led into any inconvenience by the person you mentioned to my brother, for my friend is as cautious as anybody can be; he knows them very well.

I shall be glad to have a line from you Saturday. God bless you and give you health. The papers are safe which you left with me, but if you want them let me know when you write.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from his hopes in Court intrigues and party strife, Harley might at any time receive a valuable windfall from abroad. Oudenarde, indeed, had been a heavy blow, setting the town agog again with Marlborough's fame. But as the autumn advanced it seemed almost impossible, if one took a map and studied the positions of the armies and Marlborough's

<sup>1</sup> Portland Papers, *H.M.C.*, iv, 486-496.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 495-496.

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communications, to believe that he could capture Lille. Expert military opinion was predominantly adverse throughout Europe. Marlborough as he now stood with the Queen was in no condition to sustain so grievous a reverse as the abandonment of the siege. There were always, besides, the personal dangers of the trenches and the field.

Harley, out of office, still preserved his group of correspondents. One such, Erasmus Lewis, a Cambridge man with diplomatic experience, Harley's private secretary in 1704, made a series of reports to his chief which reveal only too clearly their common point of view. "The business of our little world," he wrote to Harley (September 28), "stands still in expectation of the great event in Flanders, and till that be decided all things are in suspense. . ."<sup>1</sup>

I conceive [October 7] . . . our affairs to be in such a miserable posture that it cannot but affect anyone who has a subsistence . . . in his country. I see, however, that this ill blast blows this good, that I dare go, without fear of being insulted, into public places, which I could not have done some months since; . . . and you would be surprised to hear men say publicly we have spent so many millions to find out this great secret, that our General does not understand the *métier de la guerre*, that he has indeed twice or thrice thrown a lucky main, but never knew how to play his game, and that he is but a little genius, of a size adapted to getting money by all sordid and dishonourable ways, which I think never was the vice of a warlike, nor, indeed, of a great spirit of any sort.<sup>2</sup>

And (October 8), the fruits of eavesdropping :

Lord Sunderland, Lord Coningsby and Sir James Forbes dined yesterday at Pontacks with their City Friends, where they took Lille and raised six millions in a trice without the assistance of any but their own party, as the two gentlemen last named declared last night in all the public places, adding that Lord Treasurer had promised to drop the Duke of Queensberry, and to surrender himself up entirely to the sage advices of the Junto.<sup>3</sup>

Refreshed by these streams of malicious gossip, flowing in perfect detachment from national interest, Harley and the

<sup>1</sup> Portland Papers, H.M.C., iv, 505.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 507.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

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leaders of the Tory Opposition watched the heartshaking drama of the famous siege run its course, and awaited with equal eagerness bad news from the front and the meeting of Parliament. As this approached, St John from his country retreat gave signs of life and recovery.

*St John to Harley*

October 11, 1708

I have thought a good while that you could expect from one quarter nothing but that you have met with, and this prepossession used to make me very uneasy when we were building up the power of a faction which it was plain we should find it necessary in a short time to pull down, and when we entered into some engagements which would prove clogs and fetters upon us whenever we came in our own defence to play a contrary game. This has been and thus is our case, and what can redeem us from more than Egyptian bondage? There is one person [no doubt Marlborough] who with a fiat resolutely pronounced might do it; but when I recollect all I heard and saw last winter I despair of any salvation from thence. There is no hope I am fully convinced but in the Church of England party, not in that neither on the foot it now stands, and without more confidence than is yet re-established between them and us. *Why do you not gain Bromley entirely?* The task is not difficult, and by governing him without seeming to do so, you will influence them. Your Friends, I mean such of them as are in Parliament, will I dare say take their parts and do everything which they possibly can without direct contradiction to themselves. *You broke the party, unite it again;* their sufferings have made them wise, and whatever piques or jealousies they may entertain at present, as they feel the success of better conduct these will wear off, and you will have it in your power by reasonable measures to lead them to reasonable ends.

If they are not at first strong enough to conquer they will be too strong to be broken. *This hollow square*<sup>1</sup> will defend you who seem to be singled out for destruction, and will be in condition whenever the propitious day comes to lodge power where it naturally should be, with property.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Evidently the late Secretary-at-War had in his mind Caraman's brilliant retreat from the field of Elixem in 1705.

<sup>2</sup> Bath Papers, *H.M.C.*, i, 191.

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Harley needed no prompting where Bromley was concerned. For some weeks he had held his written pledge. "I can now assure you," Bromley had written (September 18), "of my own very sincere disposition to enter into measures with you and the gentleman you mention, for serving our common interest, and that I verily believe you will find the like in others."<sup>1</sup>

### *St John to Harley*

November 6, 1708

I am as much convinced as it is possible to be that going out of employment at the time and in the manner we did was equally honest and prudent. No man's opinion can add any weight to confirm me in this thought.

I must say further that the merit of this action depends, according to my apprehension, on the use which you and your friends make of that state of freedom which they placed themselves in by laying down their employments.

No one living is able to do so much as you yourself towards removing our present evils, and towards averting those which a very short-sighted man may perceive to impend over us. But you are the mark at which every dart of faction is levelled, and it is impossible either that you should be safe from daily insults or that the least progress should be made towards those views which you propose, unless a number of gentlemen be satisfied of their danger, unless they be convinced that to preserve themselves they must follow you, unless you inspire your party with industry and courage, which at present seem only to be possessed by the factions, and with as much of that virtuous love of the country as this vile generation is capable of receiving and which at present seems to have the least share in the guidance of any side. The fiery trial of affliction has made the gentlemen of the Church of England more prepared to form such a party than from their former conduct it might have been expected. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Thus, while the Queen and Abigail had been holding the fort against the Whigs and obdurately resisting the advice of her two great counsellors, Harley quietly and deftly rallied the Tories. The spectacle which greeted the new Parliament of

<sup>1</sup> Portland Papers, *H.M.C.*, iv, 504.

<sup>2</sup> Bath Papers, *H.M.C.*, i, 193.

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a purely party Whig Administration monopolizing all the important offices, though certainly not the favour of the Crown, was all that was necessary to unite the "gentlemen of England" into a solid opposition. To whom could they look but Harley, who had suffered for resisting Whig pretensions, and whose relations with the Queen gave him the key to the spacious patronage of any new Administration?

The intense constitutional struggle recorded in the letters between the Queen and Marlborough had proceeded unknown to Parliament or the nation. It was fought out sternly in secret. To the outer world the Constitution seemed to work with perfect smoothness. The Queen was seen to extend her gracious favour increasingly to those statesmen who had the greatest influence with the new Parliament. The new Parliament extolled its happy relations with the Crown; and the Commons voted ever larger supplies for the prosecution of the war, even before the campaign of 1708 reached its long-drawn, glorious conclusion. Such was the world parade. But underneath how strangely different! The victorious General broken and begging to retire; the faithful Treasurer a blackmailed agent of the Junto; the world-revered Sovereign working by the backstairs with the publicly discredited leader of the Opposition against the Parliament which sustained her throne and the great Ministers who had made it safe and almost all-powerful!

We have now reached the culmination of the eighteenth-century world war, and also of this story. The foundations of Marlborough's authority in England had been destroyed, and the national and European cause which he served was triumphant. His power had gone, but his work was done. We have witnessed a spectacle, so moving for the times in which we live, of a league of twenty-six signatory states successfully resisting and finally overcoming a mighty coherent military despotism. It was a war of the circumference against the centre. When we reflect upon the selfish aims, the jealousies and shortcomings of the Allies, upon their many natural divergent interests, upon the difficulties of procuring



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common and timely agreement upon any single necessary measure, upon the weariness moral and physical which drags down all prolonged human effort ; when we remember that movement was limited to the speed of a marching soldier or a canal barge, and communication or correspondence to that of a coach, or at the best of a horseman, we cannot regard it as strange that Louis XIV should so long have sustained his motto, "*Nec pluribus impar.*" Lying in his central station with complete control of the greatest nation of the world in one of its most remarkable ebullitions, with the power to plan far in advance, to strike now in this quarter, now in that, and above all with the certainty of implicit obedience, it is little wonder how well and how long he fought. The marvel is that any force could have been found in that unequipped civilization of Europe to withstand, still less to subdue him. In Marlborough the ramshackle coalition had found, if not its soul, its means of effective expression, its organic unity, and its supreme sword. Thus the circle of quaking states and peoples, who had almost resigned themselves to an inevitable overlordship became a ring of fire and steel, which in its contraction wore down and strangled their terrible foe.

This result had in fact been achieved. Behind the lines of the French armies, beneath the glitter of Versailles, all was exhausted, all lay in ruin. The Grand Monarch still stood magnificent at bay ; but his heart was broken. When he looked out upon his wasted realm, upon the depleted manhood of France, upon his pillaged treasury and half-tilled fields, upon his cowed armies and sunken fleet, despair and remorse swelled upon him in a dark flood, and peace at any price became his dearest, all-compelling wish.

Marlborough, Heinsius, Eugene, the Triumvirate of executive action, could not as yet see the dust and ashes which lay behind the fortresses, the rivers, and the mountain-chains of the French front. They saw that front was still unbroken ; they were sure it was crumbling. One more campaign, one effort stronger than any yet made, and the prize of their long toils would be won. This was their conviction at the fall of

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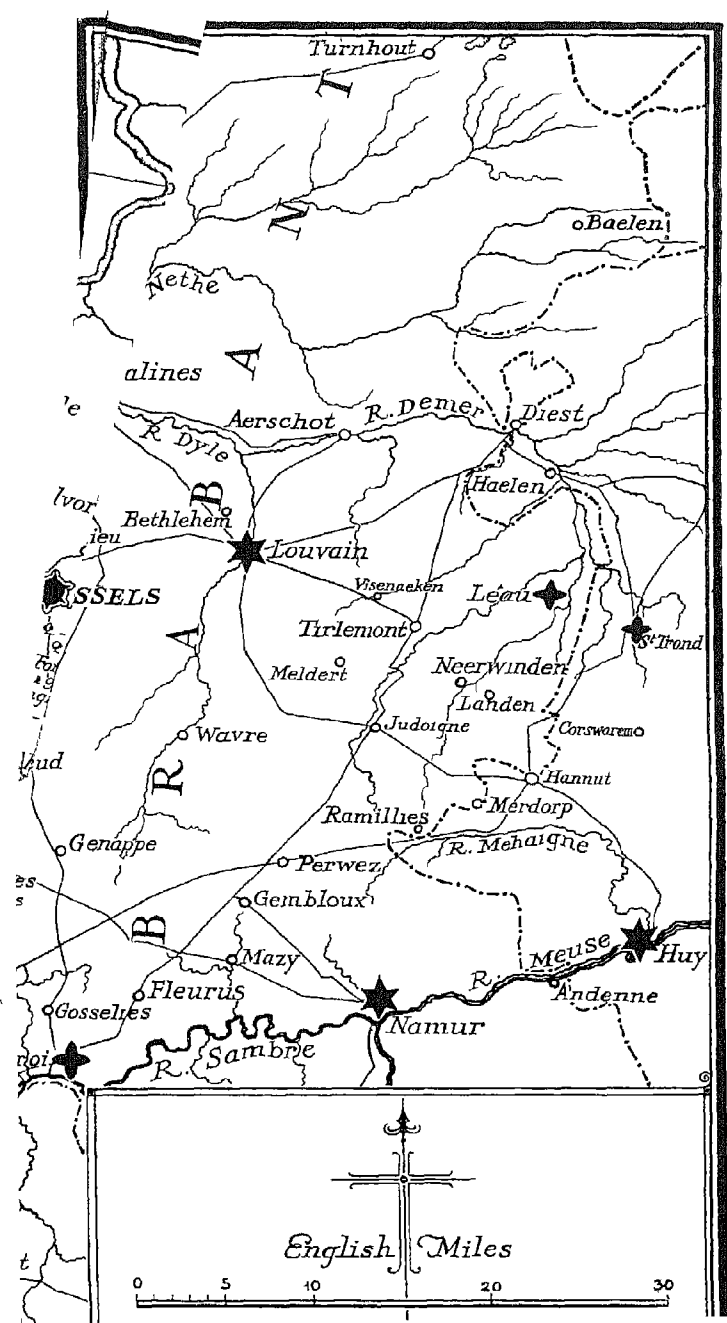
Ghent and Bruges. They could not foresee the crowning calamity of the great frost which was to fall on France in the winter of 1708. Neither, on the other hand, were they or any of their generation conscious of the new strength which the French people could supply if a war of monarchical aggrandizement should be transformed into a war of national survival. They all three underrated both the present prostration and the latent final resources of France. None of these facts presented themselves to the breathless actors in this struggle in the clear light, shape, and proportion in which we now see them. They could not tell how soon or with what exertions they were going to win. But that they were winning, and had only to hold together and drive on, was their absolute conviction.

But when they looked behind them to their own countries they saw themselves at the last gasp. The Empire, including Austria and all Germany, could not put forty thousand men in the field, apart from the troops paid for by the Sea Powers. The Dutch were worn to the bone by the endless struggles of the Republic. Their Barrier was in their hands to take and hold. They longed for peace. All future war-effort depended upon Marlborough and England, and from this moment Marlborough and England were no longer one.

The Captain-General and the Lord Treasurer, Marlborough and Godolphin, had spent upon the seven campaigns all their political capital. The Queen was estranged. Instead of being their strength, she was henceforth their bane. Sarah and Godolphin were her aversion, Marlborough a splendid but oppressive fact. The Tories, banished from power, united by misfortune, nursed revenge. The Whigs had arrived. They had forced their way into what the Queen regarded as her own apartments. They had gained control of all the great offices and assets of State, including the services of Marlborough. They had the majorities of the Lords and Commons at their backs. They cared nothing for Sarah and Godolphin; for these were blunted tools which could be thrown aside. They knew they owed nothing to Marlborough. He constantly vowed that

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he would align himself with no party. In so far as he had used his influence in their behalf upon the Queen it had been in vain. He had not only had no part in their success, but had even been grievously offended by the actual methods by which they had succeeded in gaining their ends. They recognized him as their greatest possession. They were sure he was in their hands, or at least that without them his power was at an end. He knew this too. He was inflexibly resolved not to play the game of any party. From the bottom of his heart, and with forty years' experience in court, camp, and council, he despised both Whigs and Tories with a cordiality which history has readily understood. Henceforward he regarded himself not as a leader, but as a functionary. He would serve the Government as a soldier or as a diplomatist. He would not be answerable for their relations with the Queen or with Parliament. He would lead such armies as they provided, and negotiate such treaties as they prescribed. In this humbler guise he might still procure the means to fight the final campaign and march to Paris.

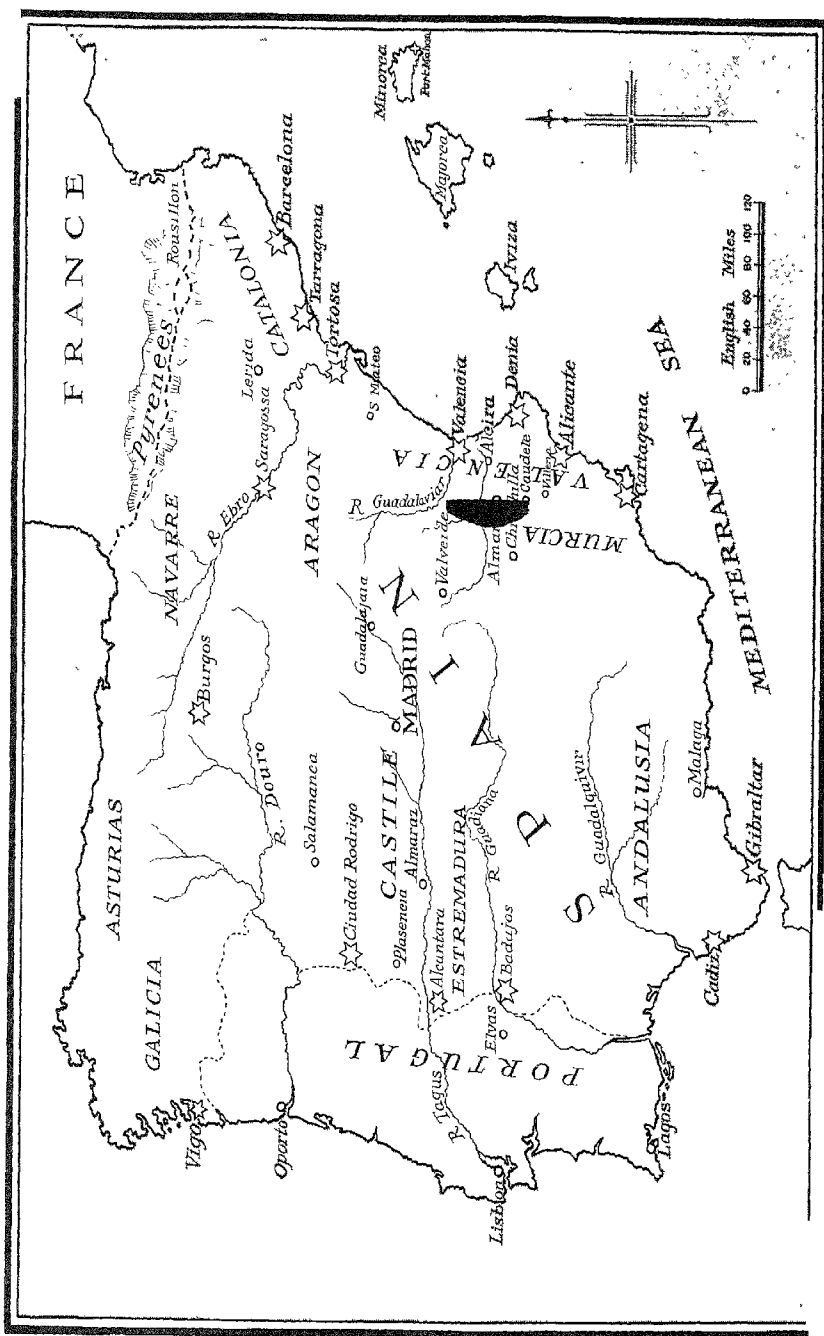


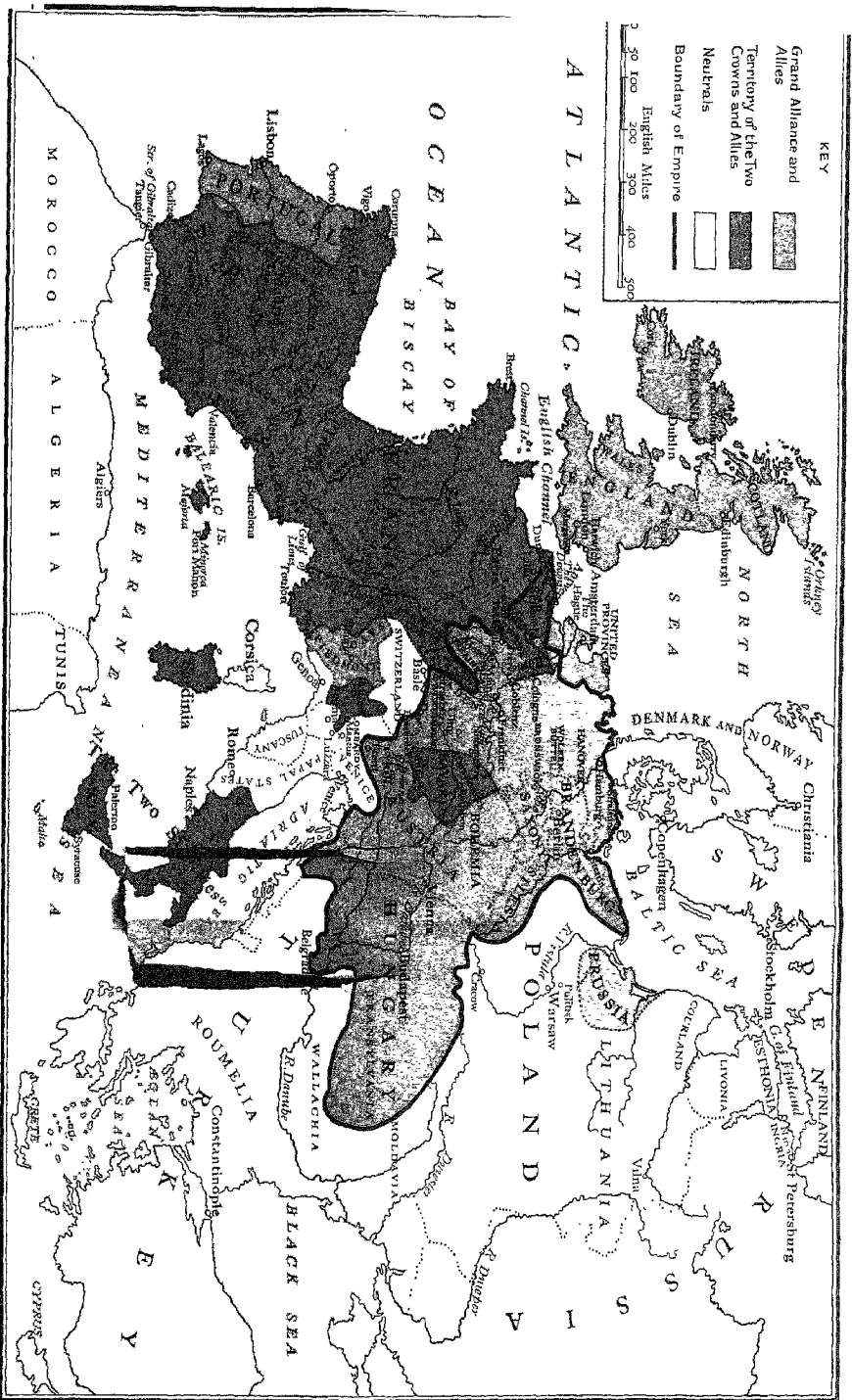


A detailed map of the eastern coast of Spain, showing the Mediterranean Sea, the Pyrenees mountains, and the regions of Catalonia and Valencia. Major cities like Barcelona, Valencia, and Alicante are marked with stars. The map includes a scale bar in English miles and a compass rose.

*English Miles*







# GENERAL MAP OF EUROPE





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<sup>1</sup> The dates indicate neither the first nor the current editions of works, but the editions consulted in writing this book. Dates in the footnotes are inserted on the same principle.

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